United Nations A/71/PV.75

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

75th plenary meeting
Friday, 7 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rahming (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 131

Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum seekers

The Acting President: I have the honour to deliver the following short statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson, who, unfortunately, cannot be here today owing to inter-State commitments.

Since the General Assembly last met on this critical agenda item, there has been a continuous flow of irregular migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Thousands have made the perilous journey, and hundreds have lost their lives attempting to do so. The drivers causing these people to flee their homes and homelands have continued unabated, as desperate people have sought to find refuge from the plagues of conflict, persecution and endemic poverty. Indeed, indiscriminate attacks against civilians — such as the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria earlier this week — remind us all of the climate of fear that people seek to escape.

In this context, discussions such as this, which seek to promote global awareness of the tragedies unfolding in the Mediterranean basin, are essential. To this end, I wish to acknowledge Turkey's leadership in bringing this agenda item to the General Assembly.

It was this agenda item that served to launch the United Nations intergovernmental process that led to the adoption last September of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), and through which Member States agreed to develop a global compact for refugees, as well as a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. With the General Assembly's adoption yesterday of the modalities resolution (resolution 71/280) to guide the migration process, Member States will soon begin consultations that will lead to the adoption of the global compact in 2018.

As we embark upon this process, I therefore encourage delegations to remember why it is that we are undertaking this process; to think of the people of Syria and beyond; to recall the tragic events that have driven so many to flee; to understand the impacts being felt by neighbouring countries, which have shouldered so much responsibility; and to therefore bring to the consultations a spirit of humanity, solidarity, and, above all, respect for all migrants' human rights.

In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Ms. Viotti: I thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting. I am privileged to be here on behalf of the Secretary-General,

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who, as members know, spent a decade on the front lines of the global refugee crisis. Just last week, he met with Syrian refugees in Jordan and Iraq, where he not only called on the wider international community to increase humanitarian support, but also to make sure that more opportunities are given to refugees.

The General Assembly brought welcome global attention to this issue at its high-level meeting in late 2015. Regrettably, since then, millions of people on the move have continued to suffer. Tens of millions of women, men and children remain uprooted. They have been forced to risk their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea to escape violence, intimidation and discrimination. Refugees and migrants often move along the same routes, facing the same risks and suffering the same human rights violations.

The tragedies and loss of life continue day after day. We are especially appalled at the suffering of the Syrian people, with the war now in its seventh year. Some 11 million Syrians have fled the country. More than 6 million remain displaced inside Syria. Millions have lost their lives, their loved ones, their hope. The misery is immense, but there are also signs of humanity and solidarity.

Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan host the largest numbers of refugees in the region. Their communities have taken extraordinary measures to provide assistance and protection to hundreds of thousands of refugees. We have also seen openness in other parts of the world. These are glimmers of hope in an environment of intensifying xenophobic rhetoric and restrictive policies that fuel violence and discrimination against refugees and migrants.

(*spoke in French*)

As representatives of the international community, we must most strongly condemn any act of violence or discrimination. We must also endeavour to understand why the most vulnerable become scapegoats, and we must try to combat the cause of this phenomenon. When they set out, most refugees and migrants have almost nothing, and the situation when they arrive at their destination is even worse. While they are poor in material terms, too often we forget that refugees and migrants largely make up for that through their energy, their intelligence, their abilities and their culture. It is up to all of us to pay tribute to the contributions made by refugees and migrants to our societies and to encourage citizens in our countries to adopt and promote our common values of tolerance and respect for human dignity.

(*spoke in English*)

That is why the United Nations is carrying out our Together campaign for respect, safety and dignity for those who leave their home and country in search of a better future. Together enables us to join forces in an effort to change negative narratives and attitudes towards refugees and migrants.

The Together campaign goes to the heart of the mission of the United Nations, and Governments are its real stakeholders. I ask members to boost this initiative so that we can rise above the fractured discourse on refugees and migrants and adopt courageous policies that guarantee the safety and security of our citizens without compromising on compassion and empathy. In the words of the Secretary-General: "No country can do it alone, and no country can refuse to do its part".

Member States have embarked on an ambitious path toward the adoption of two global compacts in 2018, one on refugees and one on safe, orderly and regular migration. This commitment represents our best opportunity to improve the lives of the millions of people on the move.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The United Nations system as a whole stands ready to support Member States in this historic process so that we can move towards a world where human movement is a choice, not a requirement for survival, and where responsibility is shared between countries and communities in which persons can live in security and dignity. Our collective efforts cannot focus only on the symptoms of irregular migration and refugee flows. We must also tackle the underlying reasons that force so many people to move and risk ending up in circumstances that are even more precarious. Prevention is our top priority. In order to keep the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must not only put an end to conflict; we must also prevent war and support peace.

(*spoke in English*)

We must invest in inclusivity and cohesion, prioritize development, protect human rights and enable all people to realize their potential. This is our shared responsibility. It requires connecting mediation and peace and security efforts with investments in

sustainable development and human rights. When we protect human rights and defend human dignity, we enable people to flourish where they are. They can help build a future of peace and sustainable development. Let us help to create opportunities wherever refugees and migrants live, so that they do not feel compelled to take dangerous journeys elsewhere. Let us uphold the right to asylum and non-refoulement, and let us counter hatred, racism and xenophobia with a commitment to tolerance, inclusion and humanity.

The Acting President: I thank the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for her statement.

As announced by the President of the General Assembly in a letter dated 3 April 2017, at this stage of the meeting and before hearing from Member States in the debate, I intend to give the floor to the observer of the International Organization for Migration. Members will recall resolution 47/4, of 16 October 1992, on the participation of the International Organization for Migration in the sessions and work of the General Assembly, and resolution 70/296, of 25 July 2016, on the relationship between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite the observer of the International Organization for Migration to make a statement at this stage of the meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to the observer of the International Organization for Migration.

Mr. Nour (International Organization for Migration): I would like to begin by making the following points. The first is that global population displacement is now at a record high. The share contributed by Syria and its region to that group of people is one of the largest. The tragedies of displaced people, refugees and migrants are heartbreaking and call for urgent attention and action if we are to alleviate their human suffering. The human cost can no longer be borne and should be of concern to us all.

Secondly, the Mediterranean continues to be at the forefront of large refugee and migratory movements. In 2015, the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe totalled more than 1 million, and we reached a turning point. In 2016, they were followed by another 365,000, and so far this year, through the end of March, more than 29,000 people have arrived in Europe. All of that adds not only to their already large numbers but, more importantly, to the complexity and impact of irregular migration in the region and elsewhere in the world.

Thirdly, human mobility generally, and irregular migration in particular, is one of the least visible movements of populations and is difficult to quantify. One of its most reliable indicators is the number of people apprehended at international borders. The limitation of that methodology is that it tells us a lot about the numbers but not so much about people's increasing vulnerability, especially that of women and children. One fifth of those who reached Europe in 2015 were children, and in 2016 that increased to 37 per cent, many of them unaccompanied minors or children separated from their families.

On a more positive note, migration is, in general, overwhelmingly a positive phenomenon, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized the positive contributions that migrants make to both their home and their host countries, as well as the fact that migration is a human reality of great relevance to development. Target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda, in particular, calls on Member States to develop well-planned migration policies so as to facilitate safe, orderly migration, and we stand ready to work with Governments in order to mainstream migration into their national development processes.

The United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, held in the General Assembly on 19 September of last year, was a unique opportunity for Member States to come together to address the conditions that create or exacerbate large movements of refugees and migrants. It broke new ground in coming up with ways for dealing with migration more collaboratively. As things stand now, the processes are already in motion for developing a global compact for sharing responsibility for refugees and another on global migration, both to be achieved by 2018. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the two co-facilitators of the modalities for the adoption of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration on their reappointment and Ms. Louise Arbour, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, on her appointment as Secretary-General of the global compact conference.

On a less positive note, I would like to express our concern about the fact that, despite all of the international community's efforts, human trafficking continues to be a global problem that affects many areas of the world, including countries in crisis, where we urge humanitarian actors to prioritize the issue, especially its prevention, and to confront it early in the humanitarian-response process rather than later on. We also call on donors to treat combating human trafficking as a lifesaving measure eligible for emergency financing, and on humanitarian and development actors to work together to address human trafficking before, during and after a crisis emerges.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the support of the International Organization for Migration for the Secretary-General's Together campaign, which we are already actively engaged in and contributing to. We also stand ready to work with all Member States so as to end all forms of discrimination against migrants and refugees, and to work together to change the current toxic narrative of migration to one that is more positive and tolerant.

The Acting President: As also announced by the President of the General Assembly in his letter dated 3 April 2017, I now intend to give the floor to Mr. Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, and without setting a precedent, to invite the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to make a statement at this meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Türk (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): I would like to thank the President for giving the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the opportunity to address the General Assembly today on an issue that is obviously very close to our heart. We are also grateful to the Government of Turkey for proposing this agenda item in 2015 and, it has to be said, for having generously hosted millions of refugees for decades, in particular the almost 3 million Syrian refugees whom it has sheltered over the past couple of years.

The Mediterranean Sea is symbolic on many fronts. It joins three continents and, since antiquity, has given birth to civilizations and world religions. Migrations across its waters facilitated intercultural, social, and economic exchanges that allowed many civilizations to flourish. In that sense, the Mediterranean Sea might be seen as one of the symbols of the common heritage of humanity.

At the same time, the Mediterranean has, of late, also become a symbol of another kind of human movement — that of forced displacement. It epitomizes both the hopes and losses that come with flight, human mobility, displacement from one's community and the search for safety across borders and even seas. More than one million refugees crossed the Mediterranean in 2015 alone. The majority of them originated in the Syrian Arab Republic, where nearly one half of the population is now displaced. Although the number of arrivals in Europe decreased in the past year by nearly two thirds overall, people — both migrants and refugees — continue to cross the Mediterranean and, tragically, continue to die in the process. Last year, more individuals — more than 5,000 — died in the crossings than in 2015 at the height of the movements.

It is essential that we counter the narrative of unmanageable crisis and the rhetoric of isolationism and that we reframe our understanding of the situation in the Mediterranean. We can demonstrate that it is possible to address such movements of people with the right systems in place and a willingness to cooperate. In that respect, the Mediterranean Sea is also a symbol of the potential for collective action and responsibility — sharing in the face of the challenges of mixed movements and the particular challenges caused by forced displacement.

Last December, UNHCR presented, within the context of the discussions in Europe, a number of proposals aimed at contributing to the rebuilding of trust through better management, partnership and solidarity. Such cooperation is necessary not only in Europe, but also around the Mediterranean and globally. That was recognized and has been mentioned already several times. It was recognized in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which

was adopted on 19 September 2016. In fact, the New York Declaration marked an important turning point in our collective thinking, encouraging us to move from seeing large-scale movements as a crisis to accepting displacement as a reality of today's world and as a phenomenon that we can and must address with thoughtfulness and equanimity.

Against that background and building on the New York Declaration, it may be timely to explore the prospects for developing a comprehensive regional approach for the situation of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. That is particularly needed for the Central Mediterranean, where the number of arrivals is clearly higher now than at this time last year. We also know that the movements are of a mixed nature. Seventy-three per cent of arrivals in Europe in 2017 have gone through the Central Mediterranean route. Already, more than 31,000 migrants and refugees have arrived by sea in Europe during the first quarter of this year — much higher than in the comparable period of last year.

The situation in the Central Mediterranean speaks to the importance of ensuring that refugees are able to get on with their lives wherever they are, or that they are able to find alternative safe pathways of admission, so that they do not have to risk their lives in trying to reach safety elsewhere. The situation also shows why safe and regular pathways, such as resettlement, humanitarian admission and family reunification, as well as building dignified lives in countries beyond the immediate region, are essential. A regional approach would need to address those goals. It would require the participation of host countries, countries of transit and countries of destination on both sides of the Mediterranean. It would also bring to bear a number of the elements that are reflected in the New York Declaration.

There is a need to stabilize the situations in countries where refugees first seek protection or through which they transit. The stability and security situation in Libya, for example, needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Refugees and migrants have reported being kidnapped, detained, exploited, or sold to criminal networks before being smuggled across the Central Mediterranean. Reception capacity is, therefore, extremely important, as well as alternatives to detention.

Refugees also need to benefit from access to functioning asylum systems everywhere. Without safety, access to basic rights or the regularization of their status, they will be compelled to move onward to other countries. We also need to ensure that they have access to education — which is one of the main drivers behind onward movement — so that they are able to support themselves and get on with their lives.

Many host countries in the neighbourhood of the Mediterranean — particularly in the Middle East, where most refugees are located — require continued support. Through timelier financial assistance and strengthened cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, as was just demonstrated this week at the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, the international community can play a key role in making sure that the critical needs of refugees and the communities that host them can be met.

Finally, all States on both sides of the Mediterranean can play a part in effecting a regional mechanism for search and rescue, which would include sharing responsibilities for the deployment of ships, as well as committing to receive individuals who have been rescued. There are opportunities to forge such arrangements that would more equitably distribute international responsibilities. For example, where countries of disembarkation have more limited reception capacities, we could conceive of creative arrangements for the temporary stay and possible resettlement of the refugees disembarked, especially those who are most at risk, as well as for the assisted voluntary return of migrants.

In conclusion, the Mediterranean must not be only a symbol of the complex world of conflict, violence and displacement in which we are living. It must also be a harbinger of hope for a different kind of engagement — one that is rooted in a deep sense of responsibility to one another and founded in a spirit of compassion and fundamental humanitarian values.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Parenti (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The Syrian conflict has triggered an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that has uprooted many thousands of people, displacing them within their territory, and confronting Syria's immediate neighbourhood, as well

as that of Europe, with major migratory challenges requiring a collective response. The EU member States just endorsed a new strategy for Syria on Monday 3 April. The European Council conclusions of April 2015 confirmed the need for a new, comprehensive and balanced external migration policy aimed at addressing those challenges.

We have therefore strengthened our policies and instruments and put in place new comprehensive initiatives, both internally and externally, with a view to stemming the irregular migration flows, while ensuring full respect for fundamental and human rights. The European Agenda on Migration, the subsequent conference on the Western Balkans migration route of October 2015 and the EU-Turkey statement of March 2016 are key initiatives to be seen in that context.

We recognize and greatly value the action taken by countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan in hosting large numbers of refugees. Forcibly displaced Syrians account for more than 2.7 million of the refugees in Turkey, more than 650,000 in Jordan and more than 1 million in Lebanon. The European Union made significant financial support available in 2016 in order to ensure that those countries were able to provide adequate support to those in need. We are continuing our cooperation with Turkey on establishing legal avenues and on reducing irregular migration, which are the basic principles in the EU-Turkey statement. The number of crossings from Turkey to Greek islands, and the related losses of life, have fallen substantially, although they have not stopped altogether.

The EU will continue to work to provide adequate legal pathways, such as through resettlement, and particularly for people in need of international protection, in order to contribute to international efforts in line with the commitments made in September under the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1). The EU is building on existing efforts, such as the implementation by EU member and associated States, which began in July 2015, of the first EU-wide resettlement scheme, with places for 22,504 people. Discussions are also ongoing in the EU on establishing a permanent resettlement and humanitarian admission framework. This week, the EU hosted a ministerial conference in Brussels on supporting the future of Syria and the region, which brought together representatives of 70 countries and organizations. It was co-chaired by Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar and the United Kingdom, together with the United Nations, with the presence of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria.

In the wake of the shock of the recent chemical attack in Idlib in Syria, the international community sent a strong message of recommitment to working together to support a peaceful future for Syria and all Syrians in a sovereign, independent, unified and territorially integrated country in which all Syrians can live in peace and security. The Brussels conference also recognized that the humanitarian and resilience needs of vulnerable people in Syria and in the region, especially women and children, have never been greater. The participants agreed that significant financial support, as well as innovative and holistic approaches, are needed if we are to meet the massive needs of populations both inside Syria and in its neighbours, particularly Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Support will continue to be given to Jordan and Lebanon's economic development in order to help them handle the impact of this protracted crisis and to create opportunities for Syrians to find livelihoods. The conference welcomed the progress that has been made in opening labour markets to refugees and agreed to support job-creation programmes aligned with the social and economic development strategies of the host countries' Governments. The participants' generosity resulted in €5.6 billion, or around $6 billion, being pledged for 2017.

But the current challenges go beyond the Syrian refugee crisis, and there is a clear need to address the long-term underlying causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, as well as to tackle the short-term challenges. That is what we are doing through the Migration Partnership Framework approach endorsed by the EU Heads of State and Government in June 2016, an ambitious strategy based on the concept of partnership and cooperation with countries of origin and transit. We are implementing it in a first group of priority countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with the aim of addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement, fighting smugglers and trafficking, ensuring the protection of those who need it, promoting people's effective return and readmission, and opening legal migration pathways where appropriate. It is a holistic, tailored approach that is also aimed at helping our partners to develop socioeconomically viable solutions in the countries concerned.

Building on that work, the EU is stepping up its efforts to address irregular migration flows along the route through the central Mediterranean, while remaining

vigilant about routes in the eastern Mediterranean and elsewhere, as set out in a Commission communication of 25 January and our subsequent adoption in February of the Malta Summit Declaration. The principles remain the same. They include launching a number of concrete operations aimed at saving lives, stepping up the fight against smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean, ensuring that migrants are treated in compliance with human rights and humanitarian assistance obligations, and improving border management in close cooperation with North African countries, especially Libya. All of those actions include a cross-cutting human-rights dimension. The EU is working closely on the ground with its international implementing partners, especially the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, to improve refugee and migrant living conditions and ensure their protection, in full compliance with our obligations under international law.

We are committed to working together to see the process succeed in an effort to move towards global governance of human mobility, recognizing that while States have the right and responsibility to manage and control their borders, we must, as an important element of their security, ensure that border-control procedures are implemented in conformity with the applicable obligations under international law, including international human rights and refugee law and in particular the principle of non-refoulement, as established by the 1951 Refugee Convention. The large movements of refugees and migrants represent both a global challenge and an opportunity. They can be addressed by the international community only as a whole, based on the principles of global responsibility-sharing and on finding collective solutions that also commit countries to uphold the safety, dignity and human rights of refugees and migrants.

Migration is indeed inevitable and necessary. If managed in an orderly and sustainable way, it is also desirable. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants builds on that recognition and provides an overall political framework for tackling all of the many different aspects of such movements. The EU stands behind the Declaration as an excellent, balanced basis for collective multilateral action and is fully engaged in the work of developing future United Nations global compacts for refugees and migrants.

In that context, we remain concerned about the growing trend towards racism and xenophobia, which target migrants in particular and can be observed in EU countries as well. Together with our member States, we are especially focused on the New York Declaration's commitment to countering acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance against refugees and migrants, and we have already done a great deal in that regard, both within the EU and together with our external partners, particularly with regard to preventing and countering prejudice, hate crimes and hate speech.

Those efforts include creating platforms such as an EU High-level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, which is aimed at fostering peer learning and the exchange of best practices among member States, civil society and international partners, at mounting targeted action against the spread of illegal hate speech on the Internet, and at launching initiatives aimed at promoting balanced narratives and a pluralistic media environment that can promote a well-informed public debate around such issues. A hate-crime training guide for law-enforcement and criminal-justice authorities, an overview of resources and initiatives for supporting hate-crime training programmes in EU member States, and a first implementation report on the effectiveness of the EU code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online have already been published and are available on the High-level Group's website. EU policies are also evidence-based, and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights regularly provides data and reports on developments relating to migration and hate crime.

We firmly believe that our approach and activities, notably the engagement with partners under the Partnership Framework approach, which takes into account the wider geographical aspects of migration management, constitute an important contribution and will link up naturally with the new global compacts that we are jointly shaping. Large movements of refugees and migrants are the new reality, and we will all have to act in solidarity and unity in a broad multilateral context. Only through effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, and by embedding migration fully in our respective foreign policies and relations, will we be able to achieve our collective goals.

Mr. Erginay (Turkey): It is a great pleasure for me to attend this timely meeting of the General Assembly. I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening it and the Chef de

Cabinet, the Assistant High Commissioner of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the observer of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for their remarks. I would also like to say that Turkey welcomes the appointment of Ms. Louise Arbour as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration. She will play an important role in coordinating the United Nations system's efforts. We would also like to express our thanks to Sir Peter Sutherland, who made every possible effort in his capacity as the previous Special Representative.

Today's debate is another important step in our efforts to save the lives of migrants and refugees. It is the second time that the General Assembly has convened under this agenda item, and it represents the first opportunity to discuss the issue of migrants and refugees in the Assembly since the 19 September Summit last year. The Assembly will recall that Turkey proposed including the item on the agenda for the seventieth session. The previous debate provided an opportunity for then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to present his road map for addressing the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants, and the process that followed resulted in the Assembly's adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1).

International migration and the ongoing refugee crisis continue to be major themes at the global and domestic levels. Over the past two years, the international community has signed on to important commitments. In September 2015, the States Members of the United Nations unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which endorsed a set of goals. We should not forget that the 2030 Agenda also included some migration-related targets — particularly targets 8.8, on the rights of migrant workers, and 10.7, on well-managed migration — which should be seen as examples of progress on our joint efforts.

The first ever World Humanitarian Summit, hosted by Turkey in May 2016, focused global attention on exploring ways and means to better deliver and harmonize humanitarian aid and development assistance. It generated more than 3,000 commitments to action, but one message in particular resounded loudly and clearly — that of "One Humanity, Shared Responsibility". The 19 September Summit and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants also provided a demonstration of the international community's concrete commitments and political will to address the needs of migrants and refugees, as well as a testament to the importance of responsibility and burden-sharing. It is now high time to put our commitments into action. We believe that today's meeting and the upcoming consultations and negotiations on two global compacts on migration and refugees represent historic milestones.

The scale of global displacement today is profound. Some people move of their own will, but millions leave to escape armed conflict, poverty, food and water insecurity, persecution, terrorism or natural disasters. The total number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide exceeds 65 million, and of those, more than 21 million are refugees and 3 million asylum-seekers. Those numbers are soaring every day, amid a lack of funding and appropriate protection mechanisms. The conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, the Lake Chad basin and several other countries and regions, as well as protracted situations such as that of the Palestinian refugees, continue to be sources of persistent concern. Indeed, the conflict in Syria has entered its seventh grim year. Since March 2011, Syrians have watched as huge parts of their beloved country have been reduced to rubble. Hundreds of thousands have been killed. More than 6 million people are displaced within Syria and around 5 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

The regime's relentless attacks on its own people continue. Turkey strongly condemns the chemical-weapon attacks perpetrated on 4 April by the Syrian regime in Khan Shaykhun, which claimed the lives of innocent civilians, including children. The use of toxic chemicals as a weapon constitutes a war crime, a crime against humanity and a violation of international law. It is a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention and defies the relevant Security Council resolutions. It also constitutes a grave violation of the ceasefire regime in Syria. The erosion of the ceasefire carries with it the risk of further movements of Syrians. Turkey will fully support any steps aimed at ensuring accountability and preventing impunity in cases involving such crimes. In order to save their lives and build a future for their children, refugees resort to desperate methods and take dangerous journeys. According to IOM data, in 2016 recorded migrant deaths increased by 27 per cent worldwide compared to the previous year. Sadly, as was mentioned earlier, more than 5,000 migrants lost their lives in the Mediterranean in 2016.

We cannot turn a blind eye to their plight. First and foremost, it is our shared responsibility to save their lives. For centuries, Turkey has made every effort to help people in need and will continue to do so. In that understanding, Turkey today hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, almost 3.2 million. We aim to prevent deaths while exploring ways and means to find and create better opportunities for migrants and refugees. I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to some figures. Between 2005 and 2016, a span of 10 years, the number of irregular migrants apprehended while attempting to cross our territory was approximately 850,000. In 2016 alone, the Turkish authorities prevented more than 170,000 irregular crossings. In 2016, the Turkish Coast Guard rescued approximately 40,000 migrants on the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. The figures speak for themselves and show the necessity and importance of the Turkey-European Union (EU) cooperation, which culminated in the agreement of 18 March 2016. We have three main humanitarian objectives for that cooperation — preventing the loss of lives in the Aegean Sea, breaking the migrant smuggling networks and replacing illegal migration with legal migration.

Today, our endeavours are bearing fruit. We have managed to prevent the loss of lives in the Aegean, crush migrant smuggling rings and replace irregular migration with regular migration. Since October 2016, the average number of irregular crossings has fallen from 7,000 a day to fewer than 100. In the period from the beginning of 2015 until 18 March 2016, more than 1,000 irregular migrants died in the Aegean Sea. Since the agreement of 18 March, the total loss of life in those waters has been 31. Overall, in one year, our efforts had a deterrent effect on more than 1 million irregular migrants trying to reach European Union territory, and as a result, arrivals in the EU dropped by 99 per cent. The agreement sent a clear message to migrant smugglers that the Aegean Sea will no longer be a place where they can profit from desperate people or conduct business.

The situation in Syria and that of its refugees is the most immediate challenge we are facing today. Despite the difficulties it represents for our national security, economy and social fabric, we have maintained our open-door policy for Syrians who have had to flee their country. Today, Turkey is home to more than 2.9 million Syrians, corresponding to about 15 per cent of their pre-war population. That is more than the population of about 100 individual countries around the world. Only 10 per cent of Syrians in Turkey are accommodated in temporary protection centres; the rest live in urban areas. Every single Syrian in Turkey is under our Government's protection regime. There are currently approximately 835,000 school-age Syrian children in Turkey, and 508,000 of them attend public schools.

Over the past six years, we have provided Syrians with more than 20 million polyclinic services, and more than 1 million have received inpatient treatment. Around 200,000 Syrian babies have been born in Turkey, more than the demographic growth of some European countries. We not only provide Syrians with food, non-food items, medical and education services, we also enable them to contribute legally to our economy. The Turkish Government, together with Turkish non-governmental organizations and municipalities, has so far spent a total of $26 billion on those efforts. That is close to the total yearly budget of about 150 individual countries. And in that regard, I have to say that the international community, and the EU in particular, has miserably failed the test of burden-sharing.

As I have said, Turkey is keen to extend a helping hand to all people in need. As a result, we are actively supporting the development and humanitarian work for 5.3 million Palestinian refugees being done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Agency's role requires the continuing generosity of the international community. Our motivation is simple. It is to protect human dignity. That is why we call on all stakeholders to share the responsibility for ending the plight and suffering of millions of people in need, because one day it could happen to any of us.

Migration is as old as humankind. It will neither vanish nor end. It is therefore our collective responsibility and duty to work together to find appropriate responses to its challenges. Safe, regular, orderly and legal migration paths will undoubtedly serve our common interests. It is in that understanding that Turkey assumed the 2014-2015 chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. During our chairmanship, the concept of "forced migration" was worked out for the first time. Moreover, we chair the Budapest Process on orderly migration, which brings together more than 50 countries and 10 international organizations in Europe and Asia.

We recently organized a Budapest Process consultation meeting and assessed the input that the Budapest Process can provide to the future global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. In that regard, we wish to stress that, as an active international player with wide-ranging experience on the issues of migration and refugees, Turkey is ready and eager to provide concrete contributions to the consultations and negotiations processes for the two global compacts on those issues. To that end, we have informed the President of the General Assembly of our desire to moderate at least one of the panels at the discussions to be held during the consultations process of the global compact on migration.

The global compact process needs to be inclusive, transparent and comprehensive. We urge all stakeholders to work together, benefit from the expertise of the International Organization for Migration and the relevant United Nations Secretariat units and create a favourable atmosphere for migrants. The same is valid for the global compact for refugees. The road map provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the development of the global compact for refugees provides a basis for inputs. The consultations on the global compact for refugees must also be inclusive and take into account the views of host countries, inter alia. Furthermore, we encourage the successful development and implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which will also take into consideration the long-term needs of refugees and those who host them.

While working to find proper and just ways to end the suffering of millions of people, what we need is comprehensive and durable migration policies. To that end, we should, first of all, give top priority to saving lives and providing protection for those who need it, which includes better equipping ourselves to save and protect the lives of people, as well as executing functional, quick and equitable resettlement programmes.

The second important aspect is responsibility and burden-sharing. Let me underscore that the international responsibility for refugees and migrants stems not from geographical proximity, but from humanitarian values that are a manifestation of our collective conscience. In that respect, we believe that the international community should step up its efforts in terms of humanitarian financial aid.

The third objective should be to eliminate the "push factors", such as wars and conflicts, human rights violations, economic deprivation and the negative effects of climate change experienced by many of the countries of origin. While addressing the drivers of migration, it is of utmost importance that destination countries support peace processes and promote the peaceful settlement of disputes in conflict-affected areas, as well as that they ensure the delivery of development assistance to the countries in need. International assistance should be a long-term investment in our collective security, peace and prosperity.

Fourthly, we should exert every possible effort to open and secure more regular channels of migration as viable alternatives to irregular migration. It is our duty to give people with certain levels of skill the chance to migrate legally and safely. Recognition of migrants as key actors in development is a critical first step towards harnessing the potential of migrants to contribute to the development of home and host countries. In that respect, it is important to lower the costs of remittances, enhance financial literacy and the portability of social benefits, and promote the recognition of skills and migrants' rights.

Lastly, we should refrain from poisonous rhetoric and attitudes towards migrants and refugees. Unfortunately, in times of turmoil and uncertainty, we observe that migrants and refugees become scapegoats. We see a rising trend of discrimination, xenophobia, Islamophobia and racism. Such dangerous trends naturally affect the Mediterranean basin as much as other corners of the globe. They are fuelled by the populist rhetoric of the extremist/populist parties and by biased media portrayals, all of which represents a huge challenge to democracies everywhere. The fear and rejection of refugees, especially Muslim refugees, is precisely the wrong answer to extremist threats. This is, above all, a battle of values; if we lose our values, we lose the battle.

We can correct such negative stereotyping. We all need to push for a more forward-looking and positive understanding of migration and refugee flows. Protecting human rights, dignity and the well-being of migrants is directly linked to their capacity to take active part in the economic and social life of host countries. It is with those thoughts in mind that we co-sponsored with Spain the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. Moreover, we believe that the United Nations Together campaign is a significant effort to

mobilize the United Nations system to create a strong and persuasive narrative of solidarity towards refugees and migrants.

The time is ripe for taking bold decisions and putting them into action. It is the responsibility of each and every individual and country to extend a helping hand to people in need. We should work together to protect the lives and dignity of the migrants, be they regular, irregular or forced to displace. If we join our efforts, we can prevent them from taking dangerous journeys, most of which cost them their lives, and stop smugglers from profiting from the vulnerabilities of helpless people.

Mrs. Shurbaji (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, the Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest possible terms the action by the United States of America that took place this past Friday morning, which was a planned act of aggression that stands in contradiction with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as with that country's role as a permanent member of the Security Council. The attack was against air bases of the Syrian Arab Republic in the centre of the country, following the episode of chemical-weapons use at Khan Shaykhun.

That event was a pretext promoted by Washington, D.C., Tel Aviv, Riyadh, Doha, Ankara, Paris and the mass media. The Syrian Government has confirmed that the Syrian Arab Republic does not possess any chemical weapons and has never used such weapons in any way in any of its operations against terrorist armed groups. It condemns the use of such weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. My delegation confirms that such aggression could lead to the spread of chaos all over the world and will allow the law of the jungle to be the way the world deals with economic and international crises instead of respecting the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of international law.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation of all serious efforts aimed at finding radical solutions and realistic approaches to the question of refugees and migrants. It confirms its rejection of the focus on Syrian asylum-seekers. That is a dangerous political precedent in terms of the United Nations agenda. The question of refugees is properly discussed under certain specific agenda items, especially since the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1).

Statistics have proved that Syrians constitute only 20 per cent of refugees and migrants moving from the Middle East towards Europe through Turkey, whereas the remaining 80 per cent are mainly of African and Asian origin. Why focus then on Syria? The reason is that powerful countries at the United Nations would like to prolong discussions and impede the achievement of objectives at the political level, all at the expense of the Syrian people, not to mention the practices of certain countries aimed at politicizing this humanitarian dossier by exaggerating the numbers of refugees for political and economic reasons, starting from obtaining financial assistance and using these refugees to exert pressure or engage in political blackmail at the international level and to conclude swapping agreements that run counter to human rights principles.

The Turkish Government has set aside the question of refugees in its discussion with the European Union. Top Turkish officials have threatened European countries with the opening of their shores and borders before new waves of refugees arrive, thereby transferring the crisis to Europe. That suggests that Turkey is cooperating with the human-trafficking mafias. In fact, the Turkish Government wants to force the European States to do whatever it wants under the so-called European Union-Turkey migration deal. The deal forced the issue of Syrian asylum-seekers intentionally into this agenda item. It reveals a contradiction between those countries that claim to be concerned about the Syrian people and their own illegal practices. Turkey is pressuring asylum-seekers by using unilateral measures, financing terrorists and ignoring its commitments vis-a-vis the Syrians. We should also mention the confiscation by some countries of the savings of Syrian refugees, as little as they might be.

Finding a radical solution to the refugee and migrant crisis means that the reasons pushing tens of thousands of persons to leave their countries and homes looking for alternative options should receive international attention. Terrorism, conflicts and wars are first among those reasons, in addition to the unilateral economic pressures that have become the means that influential countries use to impose their will on developing countries and achieve their political agendas, in the Middle East region in particular.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has assumed its full responsibility for protecting its citizens by providing a decent life for them and by continuously working with its international and local

partners in creating the best conditions for the refugees to return. The Syrian Arab Republic very much wants all of its citizens to return to their country after fleeing their homeland because of the terrorist groups and the difficult circumstances. The latter have arisen as a result of the European Union and the United States of America's imposition of a package of forced unilateral measures, which have contributed to preventing Syrians from being able to meet their needs in food, medicine, energy and to preventing the implementation of development programmes for Syria, especially for the displaced and those affected.

In that respect, the Syrian Government reiterates its call on all Syrians outside Syria to return to their homeland. And it continues its efforts to rehabilitate and reconstruct the areas that have been affected by the actions of terrorist armed groups. We would like to state our readiness to cooperate with the Governments of countries hosting Syrian refugees, since they are an important factor in finding a procedure that would allow such refugees to return to their home countries.

In conclusion, those who want to find a solution to the problem of Syrian refugees have to take the necessary measures, in accordance with Security Council resolutions on combating terrorism, especially resolution 2253 (2015), which includes controlling their borders, stopping the influx of foreign terrorists, preventing the arming and financing operations of terrorist groups, lifting unilateral economic pressures, supporting the political processes aimed at ending terrorism and finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis under Syrian leadership, without foreign intervention. We confirm to the international community that, when all those circumstances converge, the majority of the Syrians would prefer to return to their homeland to live in dignity, peace and prosperity.

Mr. Minami (Japan): Let me begin by thanking the President for convening this meeting. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to the representative of the International Organization for Migration and to the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for their statements.

The number of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, moving from east to west and from south to north, remains high. Such journeys are perilous, and many migrants meet a tragic fate before reaching their destination. We therefore feel that it is meaningful to have a discussion under this agenda item in the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. According to UNHCR statistics, those who are fleeing the conflict in Syria comprise the largest individual group of sea arrivals in the Mediterranean basin. Altogether, those from Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Iraq comprise the majority of all sea arrivals in the region. In the light of the situations surrounding those countries, it is clear that conflict is among the most serious of the root causes of forced migration.

From a global perspective, the wave of international migration is also swelling outside the Mediterranean basin. Whether in Africa or Asia, people are fleeing conflict and violence. In the absence of solutions to such conflicts and violence, people will continue to migrate irregularly. We must always bear in mind that those who cross the treacherous seas are not risking their lives for fun. They are obliged to take such a dire risk in order to escape even greater and more immediate threats behind them.

Alongside any steps that we take to solve the root causes of forced migration, we must also make every effort to alleviate the suffering and risks facing vulnerable migrants who are forced to flee their homelands. States should comply with their obligations under the principle of non-refoulement and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. We should also provide humanitarian assistance to those who suffer from unwilling displacement. Development cooperation with communities hosting refugees is also crucial.

Last year, Japan committed to providing an assistance package of about $2.8 billion between 2016 and 2018 in the form of humanitarian and self-reliance assistance to refugees and migrants, as well as assistance to host countries and communities. During the first quarter of this year alone, Japan has provided $500 million to various humanitarian and development agencies as part of that commitment, and we will continue to steadily implement our promises.

Nearly one year after we held a General Assembly meeting under this agenda item, the international framework for addressing large-scale movements of people has developed significantly. Based on the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which the Member States adopted on

19 September 2016, the processes aimed at the adoption of the global compact on migration and the global compact on refugees are ongoing. Those two global compacts will serve as a test of whether the United Nations can effectively address irregular migration on a global scale. Our support for those processes, until the adoption of both global compacts next year, is therefore critical. Japan is ready to contribute to those processes by constructively participating in the discussion on the global compacts and by supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework through funding for case-study projects.

Before concluding, I would like to add a few words on internally displaced persons (IDPs). Cross-border movements of people have attracted the attention of the international community, but in fact there are many more IDPs who flee from conflicts and violence and yet remain within the borders of their home countries. We must not forget them when we are discussing the plight of the forcibly displaced. The international community as a whole must make every coordinated effort to ensure that every person forced to leave his or her home — regardless of whether they become international refugees, other vulnerable migrants or IDPs — can enjoy sufficient protections to begin their new lives with dignity.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil): I thank the President for convening this meeting. We welcome the opportunity to hear from the President of the General Assembly, the Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the issue of refugees and migrant movements in the Mediterranean basin, in particular the situation of Syrian refugees. The General Assembly should remain engaged on that issue, bearing in mind the follow-up process for the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) and the negotiation process for the two global compacts on migrants and refugees, to be adopted in 2018.

In the light of its overarching effects on the global management of refugee flows, the situation in the Mediterranean basin is a matter of concern not only for Europe, but for the whole world. It is a challenging situation, but it can be tackled with solidarity and respect for international refugee law.

First and foremost, Brazil would like to recall its shared responsibility to address the movements of refugees and migrants, wherever they occur, in a humane, sensitive, compassionate and people-centred manner. As our heads of State stated in the outcome document (resolution 71/1) of the High-level United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016, these are global phenomena that call for global approaches and global solutions. Although their treatment is governed by separate legal frameworks, refugees and migrants have the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

On the American continent, refugees and migrants have contributed to the shaping of our societies. Brazil, for instance, is a country built on the strength of millions of people from all continents. We value that diversity. Refugees and migrants have made — and continue to make — a significant contribution to our development. Even more than that, they are an essential part of our identity. We firmly believe that the coming global compacts must, at their core, underscore the need to respect the human rights of migrants and refugees and promote social inclusion. They must firmly reject the notions and practices of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance. The processes aimed at developing those compacts should provide a comprehensive response to the need to address situations like that in the Mediterranean basin and many others.

The situation of unaccompanied and separated children is particularly delicate. Brazil attaches great importance to that issue and has worked to protect refugee and migrant children's rights throughout the process that led to the adoption of the New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees. We believe that we can advance even further, especially on the question of the detention of children.

Regarding the global compact on migration, priority must be given to expanding regular channels for migration, including decent work, labour mobility, the recognition of educational and professional skills and the development of alternatives for the regularization of migration status. A robust global compact should envisage the promotion and access of migrants to public services in countries of destination, including access to education, health, work and housing.

Brazil believes that Governments should, in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, refrain from using restrictive admission policies or establishing regimes to limit the rights of

those seeking refugee status. Those kinds of measures stimulate human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants. It is thus necessary to establish safe and legal channels for the admission of refugees and migrants, and to guarantee their fundamental rights in the countries of destination.

In that regard, Brazil is aware of and sincere in its commitments. The number of refugee applications received by the Brazilian Government, for instance, has risen by almost 3,000 per cent in the past five years. We have established a humanitarian visa programme, which has allowed for more than 2,500 people affected by the Syrian conflict to have their refugee status recognized so far. Last year, on the occasion of the High-level United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, held in New York, Brazil committed to receiving an additional 3,000 Syrian refugees and is currently considering resettlement options. We take this opportunity to reiterate our solidarity with the Syrian people and refugees and with their host countries.

In conclusion, Brazil would like to recall that the flows of refugees in several parts of the world are the result of wars, repression and violent extremism — not their causes. The legitimate concerns of Governments for the security of their citizens must respect the inherent rights of every human being. If we abandon the resolute defence of those rights, we will be abandoning our own humanity. In our relations with foreigners, with others, we test our very commitment to those values, our commitment to civilization itself.

Ms. Bird (Australia): Australia welcomes the opportunity that this forum presents to raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration. While Australia is geographically distant from the Mediterranean basin, the horrific images of people drowning at sea are etched in our minds. As in the Mediterranean, the Asia-Pacific has seen many innocent and desperate people undertaking perilous journeys, often arranged by people smugglers motivated by greed and trading in human misery.

In response, Australia's policies were developed to send an unequivocal message that people smugglers do not offer a path to Australia. The way in which we have responded has been crucial to building the confidence of the Australian people in our migration policy. Large-scale migration and resettlement is not possible unless the community is assured that it is orderly and controlled, carried out for the benefit of all, and importantly, ensures the safety and dignity of those migrating.

Public and community confidence in migration management cannot be overestimated. It has allowed Australia to maintain our high humanitarian intake, and our first-hand experience is that orderly, safe and well-managed resettlement and migration yield positive economic, social and cultural outcomes. In September 2015, Australia committed to resettling an additional 12,000 people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq, including the most vulnerable — persecuted minorities, women, children and families with the least prospect of returning safely to their homes. Australia is delighted that, as of 21 March this year, all 12,000 humanitarian resettlement visas have been issued to such refugees. More than 10,000 of those people now call Australia home, and the remainder will arrive in the coming months. The new arrivals have received a warm welcome from their local communities and are receiving world-class settlement services.

Australia has overseen the largest offshore humanitarian programme in 30 years and remains committed to an increased level of 18,750 places from 2018-2019 onward. Under the annual humanitarian programme and the additional 12,000 places, a total of around 21,500 visas have already been issued to people displaced by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. That represents, however, only one element of Australia's overall response to the humanitarian crisis. Australia is equally focused on the humanitarian and stabilization needs involved in addressing the crises contributing to such mass displacements. We recently began implementation of a $220 million multi-year package, which will provide humanitarian assistance and protection services for people in Syria and neighbouring countries. We do not underestimate the impact of hosting large numbers of refugees. Australia's assistance will also support the Governments of Jordan and Lebanon so that they can improve access to education and livelihood opportunities for refugees and local populations.

Australia is committed to global compacts on refugees and migration that will establish a whole-of-community response aimed at supporting orderly migration and protecting those forcibly displaced. We want the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to be a practical guide for migration governance, also covering mixed movements and situations of protracted displacement, as well as

addressing irregular and illegal migration issues, including human trafficking. The compact on migration should retain a clear distinction between refugees and migrants, while acknowledging that some migrants in vulnerable situations rely on the international community to address their situation and protect their fundamental human rights. We favour a non-binding, practical compact aimed at improving global migration governance where it is needed most.

For Australia and the Asia-Pacific, building on the good work of the Bali Process, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Budapest Process will be key. The Asia-Pacific will benefit most from action-orientated responses that provide the greatest support to vulnerable people.

Australia sees the global compacts as a turning point in how Governments, international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations respond to mass displacement. The compacts can increase clarity, predictability and international cooperation in managing mixed migration flows and, in turn, increase public and community confidence in migration.

Mr. Grant (Canada): For most of us in this Hall, crossing a border is little more than an administrative nuisance. And yet, last year, close to 8,000 people died in their attempts to cross an international border. Two thirds of them lost their lives in the Mediterranean alone. We can only imagine the courage that those individuals had to summon to take such a perilous journey. Imagine, as well, how they and we could have prospered if their courage and ingenuity had reached their full potential. Imagine if we had known what their capacities and skills were, what they too could have achieved if they had not died at sea. My question is, therefore, how we should reorient our global approach to migration and displacement so that this full human potential can be harnessed instead of squandered.

Canada sees three key ways to move forward. First, we need ambitious and constructive leadership. With growing xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiment heard around the world, we need to have both public- and private-sector leaders challenge polarized views and promote a more constructive narrative on migration. We look forward to greater collective engagement in the United Nations TOGETHER campaign. We also look forward to the work of the new Special Representative for International Migration, Louise Arbour, who will help to catalyse efforts in that area.

Secondly, as Member States, we need to develop more comprehensive planned national systems of migration that will enable the diversification and expansion of regular legal pathways for migration, including refugee resettlement. Improving regular pathways, while not a panacea, can help to reduce human tragedies and harness the human potential currently remaining untapped or even lost. In the Canadian experience, engaging diverse stakeholders, including at the grass-roots level, in planning and contributing to various stages of migration and refugee processes is a key element of our comprehensive approach.

(*spoke in French*)

Thirdly, we need to achieve more comprehensive responses to refugees and internally displaced persons. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit and greater engagement by international financial institutions in contexts of forced displacement offer some possibilities for changing the current operating model. However, we need to redouble efforts to mobilize the political will and resources required to translate commitments into significantly improved realities for refugees and host communities.

Canada recognizes its unique geographic position and special history of immigration. We are aware of the significant challenges faced by source, transit and destination countries responding to immigration flows, whether it be along the Mediterranean Basin or beyond.

(*spoke in English*)

We remain ready to exchange best practices and innovative solutions for safe, orderly and regular migration. We also look forward to continued dialogue as we fulfil our New York Declaration (see resolution 71/1) commitments.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic has historically maintained a principled position on the protection of the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers. In that regard, it has always supported the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and actively participated in the negotiation process for the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1).

With regard to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, Argentina continues to be deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in that country and condemns all acts of violence, including attacks against the civilian population. My country fervently hopes that the recent initiatives to end the violence in Syria and start a political process will give rise to a new phase whose purpose is to end years of disagreements and disunity.

In the past five years, my country has stated in every discussion on Syria that the only solution to the conflict is political and not military, much less terrorist, as the Security Council has also recognized. The refugee crisis in the Mediterranean basin, in particular the aspect of it triggered by the situation in Syria, clearly represents today's greatest humanitarian emergency, causing the displacement of millions of people, both internally and across international borders, who are desperately searching for protection and security. It is a fact that, despite the significant efforts of Syria's neighbours, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, the capacity to receive refugees is overwhelmed by the numbers of displaced persons, which has led to hundreds of thousands of people continuing their journeys, desperately seeking to reach Europe by any means, endangering their lives and those of their families.

Given the need to provide protection for the Syrian population, Argentina has, since 2014, pledged to share in the international responsibility and do its part by admitting refugees from Syria and its neighbouring countries through the implementation of a special humanitarian visa programme for foreigners affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, in 2015 we created an interministerial working group under the Chef de Cabinet of Ministers with the purpose of establishing general guidelines for the humanitarian admission of people who have been displaced as a result of the situation in Syria and proposing ways of ensuring their social inclusion. The ultimate objective is to fully integrate the refugee population into host communities through active participation, coordination and full commitment on the part of every national, state and local authority in every area of the Government.

Argentina is also committed to addressing humanely the needs of those who are most vulnerable, by providing concrete aid in extremely serious humanitarian crises as they occur and to refugee populations in emergency situations. In that regard, our White Helmets are doing crucial work in assisting the most vulnerable. The fact is that more than half of the refugee population are women who, besides being vulnerable as displaced persons, are in more difficult circumstances even when they reach an apparently safe place. The increase in the numbers of unaccompanied or separated children and adolescents seeking refuge is also very worrying. Particular factors such as age, national origin, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and others may also put refugees at risk of being unprotected or discriminated against. We must strengthen our commitments and actions if we are to protect the dignity and human rights of every refugee.

Argentina affirms and acknowledges that despite the complexity of current international flows, we should not confuse refugees with migrants, legally or conceptually. However, it is also important to emphasize that while no country is exempt, regardless of its level of development or international ranking, the reality is that 87 per cent of refugees are being hosted in developing countries and the international community should take that into account as it tries to provide solutions.

We are grateful for this dialogue so that we can continue to come up with concrete responses to what has become the greatest migratory crisis in the world's recent history. Every day we hear about thousands who are suffering and dying in their attempt to save themselves from violence, persecution and poverty. We cannot and should not remain indifferent in the face of that situation. It is time to act.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): Last week, the United Nations reported that 5 million Syrians had fled to neighbouring countries, a new but sadly unsurprising record high in the light of the devastating ongoing conflict in Syria. The chemical-weapon attack earlier this week is a particularly abhorrent example of the complete disregard for international law that has characterized the Syrian conflict since its beginning. The perpetrators of that and other war crimes must be held accountable, but the Security Council has once again refused to be responsible for that. In the light of the military strikes against Syria, it seems that it will be even more difficult for the Council to agree on a way forward. The Council has continually failed to meet the expectations of the 112 signatories to the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, which constitute a large majority of the United Nations membership. That only adds to the relevance of the code, and I would like to take this

opportunity to once again invite all remaining States to join that initiative.

Combating impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are priorities in Liechtenstein's efforts to mitigate the suffering of refugees and migrants and prevent other crises from erupting. Accountability not only brings justice to victims, it also has a deterrent effect and lays a foundation for reconciliation. Resolution 71/248, which establishes an accountability mechanism for crimes committed in Syria, is an important step in that direction. The mechanism enjoys very broad support among the United Nations membership, both politically and financially, and is a welcome sign that the General Assembly is ready to assume responsibility in the wake of the Security Council's systemic failure to address the crisis in Syria.

Liechtenstein applauds the extraordinary display of solidarity on the part of Syria's neighbours, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, which continue to welcome Syrian refugees in large numbers. Their commitment reflects our view that every State should contribute in solidarity to the mitigation of the migration and refugee situation. Migration should take place in a safe and orderly manner. States must also uphold their obligations under the relevant international instruments on refugees. We urge all States to participate in resettlement and relocation programmes.

By participating in the resettlement programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the European Union's relocation scheme, Liechtenstein is contributing to the joint international efforts to address the mass displacement out of Syria. In addition, Liechtenstein has provided more than 2.5 million Swiss francs, or close to $70 per capita, in humanitarian and development aid for projects supporting Syrian refugees that share a long-term perspective and that include schooling for more than 20,000 Syrian refugees and local children in Jordan and Lebanon, building sustainable institutions and promoting women's empowerment. They also help to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which enhances societies' resilience and stability. Through its national policies, Liechtenstein pays particular attention to the speedy integration of refugees and migrants. With our innovative Liechtenstein Languages programme, they can learn the basics of German in just a few weeks, enabling them to quickly interact with the local population and public administration.

Liechtenstein supports the efforts to universalize the Palermo Convention and its Protocols, which provide a key legal framework for combating the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking. Organized crime often targets and exploits the most vulnerable, among them refugees and migrants, and women and children in particular. Far too many of them end up as modern slaves, whether through forced prostitution, forced labour or other forms of slavery. The prohibition of slavery is one of the very rare norms of international law that applies at all times, in all places and to all actors.

States are under a clear legal obligation to criminalize, investigate, prosecute and punish slavery where it occurs. Yet despite that strong universal legal norm, the impunity gap is glaring. To help narrow that gap, Liechtenstein has been pursuing innovative approaches, including involving financial institutions in detecting and disrupting financial flows associated with modern slavery — in other words, following the money. Liechtenstein recently organized a workshop with United Nations University on the topic and will present the results in the framework of the upcoming high-level political forum.

Modern slavery is one of the most egregious human rights violations. We are collectively committed to eradicating it through the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. If we are to succeed, we must focus on the most vulnerable, especially those who are forced to flee conflict, hunger and persecution.

Mr. Amer (Israel): In the past year, the world has been overwhelmed by devastating humanitarian crises, conflicts and sectarian fighting. The turmoil across the Middle East and Africa has left far too many people dead and driven millions more to seek refuge on foreign shores. They are forced to leave behind their families, friends, homes and any remnants of their pre-conflict existence.

The year 2016 has been the deadliest year for refugees who are fleeing war and conflict zones, with more than 5,000 lives tragically lost. The Mediterranean Sea has become a graveyard for countless innocents, especially children, who did not survive the deadly journey. The international community, Governments and non-governmental organizations have made considerable efforts in attempting to address the catastrophe by helping refugees to reach safe shores

and begin rebuilding their lives. However, with the increasing number of refugees and the ongoing violence and suffering in countries that they are fleeing, we are reminded that much more remains to be done.

As I stand here today, Syria continues to bleed. The violence inflicted by the Al-Assad regime, which brutally assaults its own people using conventional and non-conventional weapons, has plunged the country into the worst humanitarian crisis in the history of the Middle East. The massacre of Khan Shaykhun, which transpired just the past week, serves as a reminder that the international community has again failed to stop the Al-Assad regime from continuing to carry out its brutality.

The President of Israel, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, condemned the attack in the strongest way possible:

> "The pictures we are seeing today from Syria and the report of the massacre of civilians, of children, with chemical weapons, are a stain on all humankind. The international community must come together in order to bring an end to this murderous madness and ensure that such scenes will never be repeated anywhere."

Tragically, this is not the first time that chemical weapons have been used against the Syrian people. As reported by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, three out of the four previous chemical attacks in Syria were conducted by the Al-Assad regime. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant carried out the fourth. We cannot sit idly by and allow such cruel acts to continue. Now more than ever, we have to act and combine our efforts to finally end these atrocities. The international community must fulfil its obligation from 2013 and fully remove these horrible weapons from Syria.

As a State founded by refugees, Israel is deeply sensitive to the unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants that have emerged in recent years. Israel has been doing its part to assist those in need. Israeli non-governmental organizations have been working to try to alleviate the suffering of refugees. For instance, IsraAid, a non-governmental organization that specializes in providing life-saving disaster relief and long-term support, has created the Global Asylum Seeker Crisis Response Programme in order to specifically assist refugees fleeing to Europe. Furthermore, Israeli hospitals continue to treat injured Syrians seeking medical assistance. Jamal, a Syrian boy who suffered a rocket attack that destroyed his leg, was in a coma for 20 days in an Israeli hospital. He was 7 years old at the time that he received treatment in 2015, meaning that for the majority of his life, he has known nothing but conflict and war. Like Jamal, thousands of Syrian children wake up to violence and know only fear.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

How can we watch such crimes, which befall thousands of men, women and children, be carried out by the Al-Assad regime? This week, he added the Khan Shaykhun massacre to his record, which already features massacres committed elsewhere in the country. Not a single governorate, town or neighbourhood in Syria has been spared an Al-Assad massacre. The massacres continue. The regime will not stop bombing, shelling, impoverishing, killing and maiming its own people. The international community cannot conceivably keep watching without doing anything. The situation has crossed all limits. We have to send a clear message to the Al-Assad regime that enough is enough.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico is participating in this debate because it represents an opportunity to discuss one of the most complex issues facing all Member States. After adopting the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), we are beginning to glimpse the first global efforts to identify responses and deal with the situations faced by millions of people, which can make the difference between life and death.

First of all, we must recognize that when we speak of migrants and refugees, we are talking about human beings. Mexico has been and will continue to be a strong promoter of the rights of migrants, both inside and outside our borders. Mexico is a country of origin, transit, destination and return of migrants. It is a refugee host country. Mexico is committed to the security and dignity of these agents of progress and development. Despite the best efforts of some countries and the insistence of many others in favour of a political solution to the conflict in Syria, we continue to lament this serious humanitarian crisis, which has global consequences.

Refugees are not a source of insecurity. They are protagonists of suffering. The year 2017 has been more dangerous than 2016 for migrants and asylum-seekers. In the first three months of this year, 2.4 per cent of all migrants arriving in the Mediterranean perished,

compared with 1.4 per cent over the same period in 2016. Transnational organized crime organizations, migrant smugglers and traffickers take advantage of gaps in international cooperation in order to exploit their victims. This phenomenon is not unique to a single region. Where there is no shared responsibility, the unnecessary suffering of migrants and refugees is present.

We salute those Governments and members of civil society who have joined the efforts to save lives. The thousands of volunteers whom we see at sea and on the ground renew our faith in the power of humankind. As long as they save lives, it is up to us to effectively coordinate efforts to take on the causes and address the manifestations of migration with a comprehensive, cooperative and human-centred approach that results in communities where each person can fully realize their capabilities.

The international community faces the greatest opportunity in history to move towards a true governance of migration with a human face. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, whose preparatory process we adopted yesterday, will allow us to promote sustainable development through well-managed migration policies. The next few years will require concerted efforts and political will in a framework of inclusive, open and transparent dialogue. In that regard, we call upon all Member States to begin to implement the commitments contained in the New York Declaration as soon as possible.

We note with alarm the feelings of discrimination, xenophobia and racism that promote the migrant as a factor of unemployment for nationals of destination countries. In fact, migrants are a factor of development for these countries, which has been statistically demonstrated. We reject indications that qualify migrants as risk factors for the preservation of national cultures. Far from it, refugees and migrants enrich their host societies. Speaking out against xenophobia, hatred and hostility towards foreigners is not enough; we must also foster social cohesion and inclusion. Mexico is proud to have launched a national campaign along with Secretary-General Guterres. As we work hand in hand with the United Nations, we fight to uphold the rights of refugees and migrants and to denounce xenophobia.

Let us have the courage to acknowledge the artificial pragmatism in the hate speech derived from ill-conceived extreme nationalist ideologies. Let us have the strength to condemn and reject the barbarism and perversion of those who take advantage of the plight of migrants and make them a target of racism. Let us be fully mindful and astute in the best interest of humankind. Mexico joins in solidarity with all migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers around the world and waits for the day when this United Nations agenda item will be recalled as a historic watershed — the day we decided to walk on the right side of history.

Mr. Cerutti (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's meeting, whose aim is to raise awareness worldwide about the tragic plight of refugees and migrants, in particular Syrian asylum-seekers in the Mediterranean basin.

Switzerland is deeply concerned about the extent of the situation and about the human tragedies that are concealed by the figures we just heard. Our country is determined to assist in finding lasting solutions to the complex challenges inherent in this situation. To that end, we must take action on two fronts. First, we must find ways to prevent such tragic situations from occurring in future and, secondly, we must improve life for those who were forced to leave their country. First and foremost, prevention must be at the centre of our concerns. The lack of respect for international humanitarian law during hostilities is a major cause of forced displacement, in Syria in particular. It is time for action. We must find political solutions to the armed conflicts responsible for so much suffering and put an end to violations of international law.

If our prevention efforts are ineffective, our second priority must be to improve the lives of those who have been forced to leave their home country. The current levels of displacement cause humanitarian challenges, in particular in terms of offering protection and in finding lasting solutions. Switzerland reiterates the need for respect for international law in host and transit countries for migrants and refugees.

In conclusion, let me recall that the drafting of the two global compacts is a unique opportunity for us to work together. The objective will be to develop a robust framework that addresses the root causes of conflict and forced displacement, considers the vulnerability of migrants and refugees and strengthens their rights and, finally, contributes to the effective management of international migration. The only way to solve today's

migration challenges is by working together and by demonstrating strong political will.

Mr. Krapp (Germany): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union on behalf of its member States.

Today's debate is important because it reminds us that the tragedy experienced by irregular migrants in the Mediterranean is still ongoing. This year, tens of thousands of people have undertaken a dangerous journey to Europe and hundreds have lost their lives along the way. The number of people taking that route has only risen. So far this year, nearly 25,000 migrants and refugees have reached Italy by boat, compared with only 19,300 during the same period last year. Many countries around the world have responded to that tragedy by hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants. Although Germany in particular and the European Union in general are doing a great deal to support the refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, it is clear that no single country or region can tackle the refugee and migration crisis on its own. The tools of domestic and regional policy are simply not sufficient. This is a global crisis that demands a global response with globally shared responsibility.

In that light, Germany strongly welcomes the progress towards establishing a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and a global compact on refugees. We urge all States Members of the United Nations to help develop those crucial tools needed to address large-scale migration and displacement around the world. Together with Morocco, Germany has assumed the chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development for the negotiation period of the global compact on migration. We will use our chairmanship to advance the global compact and to support its negotiations, but we need to do more than create tools for responding to large movements of people. We also need to take concrete steps to support those in need right now, such as the millions of Syrians suffering in one of the most devastating conflicts of our time.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is appalling. Millions of people have been internally displaced or have fled the war, destruction and terror in their home country, most of them seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Such countries have shown unprecedented generosity in hosting so many refugees despite the social challenges that they themselves face. In 2016, nearly 900,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Germany. Germany is proud to be one of the largest humanitarian donors and long-term investors in infrastructure, education and jobs in the context of the Syrian conflict. Since 2012, Germany has contributed €2.8 billion in aid to support Syria and its neighbouring countries. We also contribute substantially to United Nations agencies and other humanitarian and development partners, which provide assistance to the 11 million refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria and the region.

Two days ago at the Syria Conference in Brussels, Germany pledged an additional €1.1 billion in aid to the people of Syria and the region, on top of the pledge we made in London in 2016. The pledged amount is the largest of any State. Humanitarian funding is no doubt important, but pledges by themselves cannot guarantee that aid will reach the people who need it. Nearly 5 million Syrians live in hard-to-reach areas and cannot count on regular supplies of humanitarian aid. The situation is particularly tragic for the approximately 650,000 people living in areas under siege.

That is why Germany is working intensively to improve humanitarian access and protect civilians and aid workers in Syria, especially those who are part of the humanitarian task force of the International Syrian Support Group. Aside from providing acute humanitarian aid, it is crucial that we ensure that refugees have a safe place to go. However, host communities are increasingly reaching their limits, and the situation in many refugee camps is tense. The aim of German development policy is not to leave the region to its own devices to cope with those challenges. What we want is for people to regain control of their lives. That is most crucial. People need prospects for a better future, and they must be put in a position in which they can provide for themselves.

To that end, Germany's development support in the region follows a three-pronged approach: education for children, vocational training for the young and jobs for the older demographic. Germany is one of the largest donors in the education sector in Syria and neighbouring countries. In 2016, we provided €245 million to support primary and secondary education and vocational training while reaching 1.3 million children and adolescents. Since 2014, Germany has also contributed €142 million to UNICEF in support of the "Reaching all children with education in Lebanon" programme. That programme is part of the international No Lost

Generation initiative, which helped more than 200,000 Syrian children in Lebanon attend school in 2016.

In the same spirit, we launched our partnership for prospects initiative at the beginning of 2016. Its primary aim is to create short- to medium-term employment opportunities and provide a source of income. By the end of 2016, we had helped approximately 61,000 people enter the work force, mainly through cash-for-work programmes and funding teachers' salaries. That is the path on which we will continue in 2017.

Finally and most importantly, we must solve the root causes of displacement in the countries of origin and transit if we are to be able to solve the crisis for the long-term. People undertake the dangerous journey to flee from war and terror. The Syrian civil war has already claimed more than 400,000 lives and made refugees of more than 11 million people. We therefore need to continue the talks in Geneva so as to find a political solution. We strongly support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to find common ground, and we urge all parties to the talks to work together for lasting peace in Syria. As the German Foreign Minister emphasized only this week in Brussels, we need a political solution to the conflict. Otherwise, we will not be able to stabilize the country, and refugees will not be able to return to their homes. Without a political solution, we will continue treating the symptoms but not the underlying causes.

Ms. Mwangi (Kenya): I thank the President for convening this debate on global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum-seekers.

I also thank Mr. Volker Türk, the United Nations Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. Ashraf El Nour, Permanent Observer for the International Organization for Migration to the United Nations, for their statements.

My delegation stands in solidarity with all asylum-seekers who are fleeing conflict and are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. They need our support and deserve to be treated in a humane and dignified manner as we seek a political settlement to all conflicts, including that in Syria. That can be achieved only through implementing fair and effective asylum procedures.

According to the International Organization for Migration, for 2017 alone, as of February the number of deaths of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean was estimated at 663 and, as of the beginning of this month, approximately 29,000 migrants and refugees had arrived in Europe. That represents approximately 11 deaths per day, and a majority of those who died came from Africa, including women and children. Those numbers confirm that people who are fleeing conflict areas and are in need of international protection will continue to seek safety in Europe and beyond regardless of push back, high-handed vetting procedures and denial of access to asylum procedures.

While crossing the Mediterranean is a particularly dangerous endeavour prone to tragedy, it has not deterred persons seeking safety from attempting to cross the Mediterranean to seek asylum in Europe. Rather, it has generated demand for migrant smugglers and organized criminal actors who ferry migrants on unseaworthy vessels, which often turn into death chambers. We have a duty to disrupt and seize migrant smuggling businesses in order to save lives.

To that end, we have established the frameworks that will guide our work in providing the means for safe and orderly migration. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the upcoming global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration accord us the opportunity to end the tragedy and suffering of migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. That will require political will, upscaling of funding resources and adherence to human rights law and humanitarian law. Recipient and destination counties have to adhere to humanitarian law.

The 2030 Development Agenda has provided us with a framework to address the root causes of conflict and the involuntary movement of refugees and migrants by integrating migration into its Goals and targets. It calls on us to: respect the human rights of all migrants regardless of migration status; take into account the vulnerabilities of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons; address forced displacement and humanitarian crises; and eradicate human trafficking.

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) commits us to assuming the shared responsibility of managing large movements of refugees and migrants in a humane, sensitive and

people-centred manner. The global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will support the safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. It will also provide for the establishment and expansion of safe, regular pathways for migration and greater international cooperation that will improve migration governance.

We have the opportunity to address the issue of irregular migration by recommitting to: addressing the drivers that create or exacerbate irregular migration; cooperating to create conditions that allow communities to live in peace in their homelands; combating the exploitation, abuse and discrimination that is suffered by migrants; implementing the 2030 Agenda, one of the objectives of which is to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality; and combating trafficking in persons, the smuggling of migrants and contemporary forms of slavery.

As a country of origin, transit and destination of irregular migrants, Kenya is of the view that establishing humane and efficient asylum systems is also key to addressing the problem of migrants and asylum-seekers in the Mediterranean basin, be they from Syria or elsewhere. We join other delegations in calling for increased support for countries of first asylum such as Turkey, Italy, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as countries in Africa such as Ethiopia, Libya and my own country, Kenya. We call for funding that can keep pace with the accelerated humanitarian needs.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At present, the situation of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean basin remains grave. This problem has also been growing for a long time in Africa and other regions with no apparent solution, which has caused broad concern from the international community and become a shared global challenge involving many complicated factors. Its root cause is regional instability and uneven development, and the fundamental solution is to achieve peace, stability and common development, strengthen international cooperation and improve global governance.

With respect to safeguarding international and regional peace and stability, all countries should adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and resolve their differences and disputes through political dialogue. The United Nations should play a lead role in strengthening good offices and mediation and in improving mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, so as to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of peacekeeping operations. The international community should promote equal dialogue and exchange among different civilizations, resolutely fight against all forms of terrorism and avoid double standards.

The conflicts in Syria have lasted for seven years, subjecting the innocent people of Syria to disastrous suffering. It is our hope that the international community will join efforts in intensifying support to the United Nations as a principal mediation channel, consolidating the ceasefire and continuously promoting the hard-won process for a political settlement of the Syrian issue.

Secondly, with regard to helping developing countries achieve common development, we should help such countries strengthen their development capacity and improve the international environment for development. We should promote a more inclusive economic globalization that will benefit all and increase the voice of developing countries in global economic affairs. Full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be intensified. Developed countries should increase their official development assistance to countries of origin in Africa and the Middle East in order to raise their development level.

Thirdly, with respect to persisting in enhancing international cooperation on refugees and migration, origin, transit and destination States of refugees and migrants should strengthen solidarity and cooperation and shoulder their respective responsibilities. The countries concerned should receive refugees and migrants in the spirit of openness and inclusiveness, eliminate exclusionary and discriminatory practices towards refugees and migrants and help them to adapt to their new environments. Developed countries should increase humanitarian assistance to developing countries and international agencies.

Fourthly, with regard to continuing to improve global governance on refugees and migration, all States should implement the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in earnest and give full play to the role of such agencies as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The developing countries have hosted the majority of refugees in the world, so importance should

be attached to the concerns and roles of these countries, who should be given a greater voice. Strong emphasis should be given to the international negotiation process of the global compact on refugees and migrants.

On 18 January, President Xi Jinping addressed the United Nations Office in Geneva, advocating for creating a community with a shared future for humankind through exerting efforts to build a clean and beautiful world. At present, humankind is in a period of momentous development, transformation and changes, facing countless challenges and mounting risks. All countries of the world are interconnected and interdependent; their fates are inextricably intertwined. It is only through the creation of a community with a shared future that we can address the various risks and challenges, including the issue of refugees and migrants.

China attaches great importance to, and is deeply involved in, the settlement of the refugees and migrants question. China works hard to preserve international peace and stability, firmly supports developing countries' achievement of common development, and actively provides humanitarian assistance to some countries and international agencies. China has provided over ¥680 million in kind and in cash to assist the Syrian people, including Syrian refugees overseas. In January this year, China decided to give another ¥200 million to that end.

Recently, China provided an additional $1 million to the World Health Organization, UNICEF and UNHCR, respectively, to support their efforts in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced people in some countries. Part of the funds in the China-United Nations Development Fund will also be used to support UNHCR and the IOM in their efforts to provide education, training and health services to refugees in countries such as Pakistan, Iran, Syria and Ghana.

China will join the international community in continuing its contribution to settling the global issue of refugees and migrants to the best of its ability.

Mr. Yaacob (Malaysia): Just a couple of days ago, at least 70 people, including 11 children, were killed in an attack in Idlib, Syria. Chemical weapons were reportedly used in the cowardly attack there. Malaysia condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest terms and calls for a swift investigation to ensure perpetrators of this heinous act be held to account.

The brutal war in Syria, which has gone on for more than six years, has taken a heavy toll on innocent civilians, causing massive displacements as they seek refuge from the conflict. In the context of irregular migration in the Mediterranean basin, we view the sheer number of fatalities among those attempting the Mediterranean crossing as a humanitarian crisis in itself. The harrowing visuals of migrants failing in their bid to make it to shore is seared in our collective conscience.

In horrendous exploitation of the misery of those migrants, unscrupulous human smugglers and traffickers seek to profit from them by offering passage across the Mediterranean while charging exorbitant rates. We condemn the atrocious nature of smugglers feeding off the vulnerabilities of those affected by armed conflict, who are merely seeking a better life elsewhere. This situation cannot be allowed to continue.

One aspect that requires our urgent attention is the rising number of xenophobic acts against refugees. The surge in the phenomenon of irregular migrants and refugees we are now witnessing is testing the limits of human rights values on a constant basis, particularly on the treatment of those crossing borders. We are concerned by the testimony of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that racial and ethnic profiling in law enforcement is pervasive at official border crossings and transportation hubs, despite the fact that such acts are fundamentally discriminatory in nature. These acts committed against refugees threaten the integrity of international human rights law, and we need to provide guidance to law-enforcement agencies through enforceable regulations, inter alia.

In the face of such humanitarian tragedy, my delegation holds the view that it is incumbent upon the international community to take decisive action. We cannot afford to wait and must respond to the alarming situation of irregular migration across the globe, either in the Mediterranean Sea, which now represents the world's most dangerous border crossing, or elsewhere, and the rising xenophobia against refugees.

In this context, my delegation is of the view that implementation of the relevant framework, as well as United Nations resolutions, including resolution 2240 (2015), which Malaysia co-sponsored together with other delegations, is of great significance. The resolution calls for action to stop human smugglers and traffickers within certain parameters and with

specificity that gives priority to the preservation of life and the safety and security of migrants, in accordance with applicable international standards.

My delegation also commends the willingness of regional organizations such as the European Union and the African Union to address the situation of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean basin. The adoption of the Political Declaration at the 2015 Valletta Summit and the joint Valletta Action Plan, adopted a couple of months ago, has provided a solid framework for addressing the tragedy of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, the Together initiative, launched last year during the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, has provided the basis for a global platform for creating a strong and persuasive narrative of solidarity with refugees and migrants, while also acknowledging the legitimate concerns of host communities. Looking ahead, I would like to take this opportunity to affirm our commitment to contributing to the work of the United Nations on addressing the situation, including its aim to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration in 2018.

Malaysia shares the views of others on the importance of addressing the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement resulting from States' fragility and insecurity. While we commend today's deliberations and their focus on Syrian asylum-seekers, my delegation would also like to highlight the fact that the challenges posed by conflicts, the persecution of civilians and networks of people-smugglers and human traffickers are not confined to the Mediterranean alone. Other regions, including my own in South-East Asia, are not immune to such challenges either. Two years ago, we were faced with the challenge of addressing the irregular movements of people in the Andaman Sea. We therefore firmly believe that the information we take away from our deliberations today will also help us to address the issue in our own region.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the General Assembly that my Government is committed to taking in 3,000 Syrian refugees over the next three years, as my Prime Minister announced during the general debate of the Assembly at its seventieth session (see A/70/PV.22). To date, we have welcomed a total of 79 Syrian refugees to Malaysia, and the administrative process for another 200 is under way. Though it is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, Malaysia, as a responsible member of the international community, is extending assistance to the Syrian people in their time of need.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): We believe it is important and timely for the international community to address the situation facing refugees and do whatever is in its power to minimize their plight and suffering. I would like to raise two basic points that I believe are crucial to how the international community, and the United Nations in particular, should approach the case at hand and other similar cases.

First, refugees are the object of shared international responsibility and protection, for which burden-sharing and a collective response are vital requirements if refugees are to be systematically protected. The international community and the United Nations should do their utmost to support refugees and the countries that host them with impartiality and based on humanitarian principles. In reality, however, that has not been the case. In recent decades, a few developing countries have hosted almost the entire world population of refugees, using their own scarce resources and going mostly unnoticed. In Iran's case, it has hosted millions of refugees from Afghanistan and Iraq for decades, and continues to do so with minimal national support, attention and assistance — or none at all. However, where migrants in the Mediterranean are concerned, a good deal of attention has been given to the problem. While we welcome the international community's serious efforts to deal with that specific situation, we continue to believe that all refugees, and all the countries that host them, deserve similar attention, and that all refugee crises should be dealt with by the international community on an equal footing.

Secondly, it is crucial to recognize that refugees and asylum-seekers are symptoms of deeper problems. The issue of refugees in our region is neither new nor unknown. Millions of Palestinians have been taking refuge in neighbouring countries for more than six decades now, as a result of the Israeli occupation. Today's wave of refugees in the Mediterranean basin fleeing the horrors of war, conflict and violence at home is the result of foreign intervention and pre-emptive wars followed by eruptions of terrorism and extremism. If the international community wants to take a responsible approach to the issue, it must tackle its root causes and wage a concerted global fight against intervention and occupation as well as terrorism and violent extremism. The illegal missile strikes that happened just last night are a clear instance of irresponsible and dangerous acts

that not only embolden terrorists but force more people into displacement. Such unilateral acts of aggression, which are grave violations of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the underlying norms of international law, could also undermine international initiatives, including those of the United Nations, to end terrorism and violent extremism in Syria.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been the biggest victim of chemical weapons in contemporary history and condemns any use of such weapons, regardless of the perpetrators or their victims. Nonetheless, we strongly condemn last night's missile attack by the United States on a Syrian air base in response to Syria's alleged use of chemical weapons. We consider such an excuse for unilateral action to be dangerous and destructive, and a violation of fundamental principles of international law. Iran believes that such acts of aggression — in which the timing, perpetrators and beneficiaries are all suspect — will complicate the situation not just in Syria but in the entire region.

The Islamic Republic of Iran remains steadfast in its determination to work with the international community to genuinely tackle the suffering that violent extremism and terrorism have inflicted on innocent displaced women and children.

Mr. Morales López (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the President for convening today's plenary meeting on a topic of broad global concern that demands our special attention. Major movements of refugees and migrants and the consequences they bring, not just on the humanitarian front but also in relation to social and economic development, require participation and commitment on the part of all of us. Ensuring the human rights of migrants and refugees should be a priority for our States.

Today's challenges are unprecedented. It is estimated that more than 65 million people have had to leave their countries in order to safeguard their lives. We cannot forget that refugees, including the vast majority of Syrian refugees, continue to live below the poverty line and at risk of their lives. Millions of women and children suffer in abhorrent situations that are very often created by groups of criminals who take advantage of their vulnerability, which leads to more violence and misfortune. It is for that reason that only through solidarity, cooperation and a people-centred approach can the effective protection of the rights and freedoms of all migrants regardless of their status, and of refugees be ensured.

There are many advantages to rising globalization, and not only in relation to goods and services. There are also advantages for human mobility, which undeniably aids in the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination. Migration has the power to transform the lives of people families, and societies. Migrants are a source of experience, skills, culture and boundless energy that make their host countries and communities much richer and more diverse. That is why we echo the call to eliminate all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

We acknowledge the efforts made by the United Nations through the campaign Together — Respect, Security and Dignity for All, which protects the rights of refugees and migrants. We also strongly support the effective implementation of the New York Declaration (resolution 71/1), of 2016, which is an unprecedented milestone in strengthening the global governance of migration and international refugee law. We firmly believe that, through the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, we will build an international architecture for those seeking a better life, in many instances, free from war, conflict or poverty, plain and simple.

Colombia believes that illegal trafficking in migrants is a crime that undermines the sovereignty of States, and that migrants who are victims of such a crime should not be criminalized or discriminated against for exercising their right to migrate. In that regard, actions aimed at addressing illegal trafficking in migrants must always be respectful of the rights of migrants and maintain the focus on combating the criminal networks that engage in that crime. We are confident that the global compact will help to foster political discussion on migration flows and their scope. We also welcome the creation of the thematic group to discuss trafficking in migrants, trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of slavery. That will be the starting point to comprehensively address such phenomena at the hemispheric level.

As a country, Colombia has experienced an internal armed conflict, which, since 1985, has, unfortunately, resulted in many victims and internally displaced persons. Since the Victims Law was passed in 2011, the national Government has assumed responsibility for bridging the gap between offering assistance to

the victims of internal displacement and achieving social inclusion. We have worked to design and implement lasting solutions, such as the socioeconomic stabilization of victims, through the development of various development policies, including access to housing, health, education, psychosocial care, justice and income generation.

Ms. Amadeo (United States): The United States looks forward to continuing our engagement in the development of a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. We appreciate the contributions of the many Member States, international organizations, United Nations offices and agencies and non-governmental organizations that are participating in the processes. As we embark on the development of the two global compacts, I would like to reflect specifically on the humanitarian needs precipitated by the crisis in Syria and the responsibility of Member States to help end the suffering in Syria.

The conflict in Syria has killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. Half of all Syrians are displaced from their homes, including more than 5 million who have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries. Despite multiple calls to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to Syrians in need, multiple parties to the conflict, principally the regime and its backers, continue to block aid deliveries to people in need in areas not under its control, including desperately needed food and medical supplies. As a leading donor to the humanitarian response, the United States finds that unacceptable. We need a genuine ceasefire and real humanitarian access in Syria. All parties with influence over combatants on both sides must ensure compliance.

Supported by Russia and Iran, Syria's regime has committed atrocities against its own people for more than six years. We are horrified by this week's chemical-weapons attack in Syria, which bears all the hallmarks of the Al-Assad regime's cruelty. We know that Mr. Al-Assad has gassed his own people before and that Tuesday's incidents were the worst chemical attack in Syria since 2013. Anyone who inflicts suffering like that on his own people is a criminal and must be held accountable. So far, Mr. Al-Assad has made it clear that he does not want to participate in a meaningful political process. Iran and Russia have emboldened him on the battlefield and, just in February of this year, Russia shielded his regime from United Nations sanctions for its chemical-weapons use. As a result of this most recent atrocity in Khan Shaykhun, the United States initiated a strike against the Shayrat air field in Syria. That site was associated with the Syrian regime's chemical-weapons programme and directly linked to this horrific chemical-weapons attack.

I want to take a moment to reflect on the conference in Brussels earlier this week and thank those Member States that made generous pledges to assist the Syrian people. The United States believes that humanitarian assistance contributes to stability and, ultimately, strengthens our collective security. That is why in Brussels we announced more than $566 million in additional life-saving assistance for Syria and Syrian refugees in the region. The United States has now provided more than $6.5 billion in humanitarian assistance since the start of the Syrian crisis. That reflects the United States' compassion and leadership in addressing the unprecedented magnitude of suffering in Syria. The funding will also help mitigate the impact of the crisis on Governments and communities throughout the region.

In closing, the United States continues to support the United Nations-led peace process for Syria. We continue to stand beside Special Envoy De Mistura as he works tirelessly to bring all sides of the conflict together to advance a political solution. We call on all civilized nations to join us in seeking an end to the terrible conflict in Syria and to end terrorism in all its forms.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is aware of the importance of addressing a topic of such relevance to humanitarian agenda — the tragic plight of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean basin.

In 2016, more than 5,000 people either died or went missing during perilous sea crossings, and, in the first four months of this year, the numbers already stand at approximately 700 people, despite the adoption of relevant Security Council resolutions. We are deeply concerned about the serious humanitarian emergency affecting refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants — the by-product of the tragic wars, political destabilization, poverty, terrorism and widespread violence that plague large areas of Africa and the Middle East — who try desperately, risking their very lives, to reach safer locations. Venezuela expresses its solidarity with the thousands of those who are missing

or who died when making those dangerous crossings to flee conflict situations and other threats.

As we said in 2016, when this topic was included on the General Assembly's agenda, we believe that focusing the discussion on Syria alone to address the deaths and disappearances of thousands of migrants and asylum-seekers who were attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea illustrates the politics of selectivity, which contradicts the broad and multifaceted nature of the topic. In this regard, we reiterate our reservations about singling out one country for discussion as the right way to approach this important issue in an comprehensive and appropriate manner.

According to different statistics, including estimates made by United Nations agencies on the issue and from the International Organization for Migration, Syrian nationals constitute approximately 21 percent of the deaths or disappearances that occur in the Mediterranean. The remaining 79 percent of victims are nationals of other fraternal countries in Africa and the Middle East. These data show that the use of the Mediterranean route to reach Europe is not an exclusive trend of a particular State, in this case, Syria. We therefore ask why we should concentrate on only one country of origin and selectively dismiss the greater percentage of victims, who come from other nations.

As Venezuela has expressed on previous occasions, we believe that while the serious humanitarian consequences of the Syrian conflict must be urgently addressed, the causes that drive the conflict must be eliminated and the conflict brought to an end, including the geopolitical agendas of some States Members of the United Nations that put their interests before the real political solution of the war in Syria, promoting it directly and indirectly. To that end, we reject the politicization of the humanitarian issue, as it serves the interests of Powers that are negatively affecting the stability of the region, and today, are seeking, with a cynical two-faced morality, to become standard-bearers for the humanitarian cause, even though they are the ones mainly responsible for the Syrian tragedy.

The imposition of war in Syria, together with the ensuing humanitarian tragedy, is a contemptible fact, to which is added the unwillingness to make real progress on a political solution. In this regard, we urge pursuing in good faith the long-term task of reaching a peaceful, inclusive, sustainable and real solution to the conflict in Syria, where all legitimate stakeholders come together in good faith to support diplomacy as a proven tool for resolving differences and fostering dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation — all this with the ultimate and supreme aim of achieving peace without preconditions and respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Syria.

To all those who promote destabilization and war, we ask that they bear in mind that the significant increase in these flows of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees to Europe and other continents is a consequence of the terrible conditions of violence and social disarticulation caused by conflicts and military aggression in such countries of the South as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, as well as by the widespread violence in the Sahel and Africa, where the nationals of these countries are dying as they undertake dangerous journeys in their attempt to aspire to have dignified and just life opportunities for themselves and their families, to seek a better life or just to flee the war, extreme violence and terrorism that are hurting them.

We see with alarm how in addition to the suffering that these human beings undergo from living in an environment of conflict and threat, once they undertake these journeys and reach other continents, many of them are dehumanized, stigmatized and vilified by their origin, religion or ethnic status. We are witnessing how xenophobia, racism and intolerance continue to mark public discourse in many countries in Europe and America, provoking discrimination and violent actions against migrants and seekers of refuge, and the implementation of national policies designed to weaken the Convention on the Status of Refugees and its Protocol. In addition, it is immoral and deeply hypocritical that those who promote destabilization and crises do not respond with international law and with due attention and receptivity to the significant increase in these flows of seekers of asylum and refuge.

In conclusion, Venezuela considers that the management of this issue should be centred on respect for dignity and all human rights and should move away from any exclusionary, racist, xenophobic and discriminatory ideological vision against those who are seeking to preserve their integrity, reach for the possibility of having a better life and protect themselves from the threats of war. It is not by raising walls or securitizing the issue, nor by invoking Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, that we will address the underlying causes of the flow of asylum-seekers and refugees to different regions, which are exacerbated by

the dramatic humanitarian consequences resulting from the promotion of war at all costs and the unwillingness to reach real political solutions.

Our country wishes to express its deepest concern about the recent use of chemical weapons in Syria, a fact that we condemn and which must be investigated. But we also repudiate and condemn the unilateral actions taken by the United States, a permanent member of the Security Council, in bombing the Syrian Arab Republic. We call for the wisdom of all relevant stakeholders in this conflict. We ask that they act within the framework of multilateralism and refrain from provoking military escalations that negate the possibilities of finding political solutions to the current conflict.

History has shown that unilateralism is ineffective and has led only to desolation and more barbarism. The world must advance on the path of multilateralism and respect for the Charter of the United Nations as the only sustainable way to resolve conflicts that threaten world peace and security, in the hope that no more peoples will be destroyed or set adrift.

Mr. Kalamverzos (Greece): As a European Union frontline country, Greece welcomes today's exchange of views to raise global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migration in the Mediterranean, with an emphasis on Syrian asylum-seekers. Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union and wishes to underline the following from its national point of view.

Respecting the rights, dignity and legitimate hopes of those who are forced to flee their homes has been our main priority. According to the most recent data of the Eurostat, in 2016, Greece received the largest number of asylum-seekers per million of its population and the largest raw number after Germany. Approximately 28 per cent of these asylum applicants are Syrians.

Since the migrant and refugee influx in 2015, Greece has made exceptional progress in upgrading its reception capacity and establishing a fully operational asylum system. As already affirmed in the European Union statement, the number of crossings from Turkey to Greece has been substantially reduced but not stopped altogether. At the same time, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of deaths in the Aegean Sea. The European Union-Turkey statement is indeed producing tangible results despite the challenging circumstances, and it should continue to be implemented by all sides. Nevertheless, we should remain vigilant, given that flows from the eastern Mediterranean route, although diminished, have not ceased. Most regrettably, the conflict in Syria continues.

The current challenges go beyond the Syrian refugee issue, and the need to address the root causes of regular migration remains a major challenge. In this context, we support the recent actions taken at the European Union-level in the field of partnership cooperation with third countries of origin and transit. We believe that the new Migration Partnership Framework is of paramount importance, as cooperation with and assistance to third countries is key for stemming and managing migration. We also strongly support the Valletta Action Plan between the European Union and African partners in an effort to strengthen cooperation with third countries of origin and transit and come to terms with the challenges and opportunities presented by migration.

Legal and organized migration must now be supported by an increase in the number of people directly received from reception centres in third countries. That would help to prevent further loss of life and ensure the safe, legal and organized entry and reception of refugees in the European Union. Strengthening the resettlement programme, in close cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, would also deal a critical blow to human-smuggling and trafficking networks. As international leaders stressed at the Summit for Refugees and Migrants last September, migration is a global issue with political, social, humanitarian, human rights and economic ramifications. For that reason, close and coordinated cooperation should guide our actions in the days to come.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Shurbaji (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, we denounce the attempts of the representative of the United States to use this rostrum to justify its wanton aggression against Syria, which runs counter to the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations and to its status as a permanent member of the Security Council. This is

an irresponsible, short-sighted act that is naive and propagandic in nature. The main aim of this aggression requires serious explanation, since it serves only the interests of terrorist groups, particularly Da'esh and Jabhat Ansar al-Din.

Syria has never used chemical weapons and strongly condemns those who do. We will never use such weapons, even against those terrorists who target our people daily. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic categorically rejects the misrepresentation of facts and the false accusations, and stresses that it will continue to implement all its international obligations and will continue to fight terrorism, without succumbing to any political blackmail or any propagandic efforts by those who seek to utilize the tragedy in their favour.

As for the representative of Israel, who represents the forces of occupation, he probably believes that his audacity and boldness will obscure the criminal acts committed by his country. We wonder about the veracity of his statement concerning Israel's sensitivity to the increasing number of immigrants and refugees, since that country has itself caused the dispersion and fleeing of hundreds of thousands of refugees, while also continuing to inflict harm and commit criminal acts against them. It is well known to all that most of those suspected of committing the worst crimes are members of terrorist groups that have been supported by Israel, logistically, militarily and otherwise.

What is happening in Syria today is one of the worst crises in the history of humankind. Today, the Israeli representative has shed crocodile tears over the tragedy instead of having his country do the right thing, which is to withdraw to the borders of June 1967 and enable all those refugees to return to their homes.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would just like to say a few words in connection with the disturbing statement made by the representative of the United States.

The American strikes on Syria on the night of 7 April were a violation of international law and an act of open aggression against a sovereign State. My Government's position is clear. The use of chemical weapons by anyone is totally unacceptable in any circumstances. The tragedy in Khan Shaykhun should be the subject of a very careful and objective investigation. However, without waiting to find out what actually happened, the United States has just offered a show of force against a country that is struggling with international terrorism.

Russia, as all are aware, provides the Government of Syria with support in its struggle against international terrorism. The United States is acting as though it did not understand some evident things. It closed its eyes to chemical weapons use in Iraq, which was officially reported by the authorities of the country. It disregarded the documented use of chemical weapons by terrorists in Aleppo. That can only encourage and strengthen international terrorism, which could lead to further attacks using such weapons of mass destruction. It is also an attempt to distract the world's attention from what is happening in Mosul, where hundreds of civilians have died and hundreds of thousands have become refugees, creating a growing humanitarian tragedy there — and all that is partially the result of the actions of the American-led coalition.

Mr. Amer (Israel) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am going to answer the accusations made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

For many reasons, what was said by the Syrian regime does not deserve any answer. It does not even convince those who utter it. It is the discourse of the intelligence services. The regime makes its people eat the leaves of the trees. This is a regime that specializes in dropping barrel bombs on its people. It is a regime of atrocity.

I do not want to respond. Often, we use the right of reply to respond to the accusations of others. However, today I am not going to defend the State of Israel. Israel is a democratic country, developed and strong. There is no need to defend Israel. Allow me to use the right of reply to say one word on behalf of millions of those in need of someone to defend them. What is happening in Syria is the worst humanitarian crisis in the Middle East. The thugs of the regime say "either Al-Assad or we will burn down the country". Indeed, they have burned down the country. They have burned everything. They have burned the people and the plants. Half a million people have been killed, and millions have been displaced. When is this going to stop?

Mrs. Shurbaji (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the occupying Power may be right. A reply should not be made to the accusations levelled at Israel. Israel is not being accused. We are speaking of facts. The State of Israel is only an occupying Power, the daily crimes of which compound those it has committed against the Palestinians and the Syrians. These are well-known facts that require no

confirmation. International law obliges the occupying Power to withdraw from the lands it has occupied and to return them to their rightful owners. The international community should hold it accountable for the crimes it has committed and continues to commit, particularly with regard to the Golan Heights and Syria in general.

The Acting President: The General Assem thus concluded this stage of its consideration of item 131.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.76

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

76th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 19 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 115 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(j) Confirmation of the appointment of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme

Note by the Secretary-General (A/71/871)

The President: In paragraph 22, part B, of resolution 1240 (XIII) of 14 October 1958 on the establishment of the Special Fund, the General Assembly provided that the Secretary-General, after having consulted the Governing Council of the Special Fund, would appoint the Managing Director, subject to confirmation by the Assembly. That procedure has been construed as applying also to the appointment of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

By its decision 67/418 of 12 April 2013, the General Assembly confirmed the appointment by the Secretary-General of Ms. Helen Clark as Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme for a four-year term of office beginning on 20 April 2013 and ending on 19 April 2017.

Following consultations with members of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the Secretary-General now requests the General Assembly to confirm the appointment of Mr. Achim Steiner as Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme for a four-year term of office beginning on 20 April 2017. May I take it that the General Assembly approves that proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-item (j) of agenda item 115.

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

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United Nations A/71/PV.77

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

77th plenary meeting
Thursday, 20 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 19 and 73 (*continued*)

Sustainable development

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft decision (A/71/L.62)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will first take a decision on draft decision A/71/L.62, entitled "Accreditation and participation of intergovernmental organizations in the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development". May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision A/71/L.62?

Draft decision A/71/L.62 was adopted (decision 71/552).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 19 and sub-item (a) of agenda item 73.

Agenda items 29, 61 and 110

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768)

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792)

The Acting President: I now have the honour to deliver a statement, in English, on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, who is unable to attend today's meeting owing to commitments at the World Bank spring meeting in Washington, D.C.

> "In April 2016, just shy of one year ago, the General Assembly and Security Council adopted groundbreaking parallel resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively). The resolutions on sustaining peace are a comprehensive statement on the role of the United Nations in peacebuilding and prevention, connecting our efforts on peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. They call for the dissolution of silos and the advancement of a strongly integrated approach, and place sustaining peace at the core of United Nations actions. The vital role of women and young people in building and sustaining peace is underscored throughout. Sustaining peace underlines the 'comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred' vision of the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the connections between the goals for sustaining

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peace and the Sustainable Development Goals are highlighted in both resolutions, which recognize that 'development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing'.

"On 24 January, I convened a high-level dialogue on building sustainable peace for all. That meeting focused on the synergies between sustainable development and sustaining peace, and on sub-themes relating to gender equality and youth, natural resources and inclusive and accountable institutions. Member States soundly and broadly affirmed the mutually reinforcing relationship between the two, noting that the best means of prevention and of sustaining peace is inclusive and sustainable development and, of course, that sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of the conditions necessary for sustainable peace.

"The resolutions on sustaining peace also recognize the importance of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in serving as a bridge between the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations and as a platform for convening all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations. The PBC is empowered to be more effective, flexible and innovative. Today we welcome its annual report (A/71/768). The Commission has taken significant steps in the implementation of the resolutions on sustaining peace. I welcome the improved PBC working methods, as encouraged by those resolutions, from which has emerged a more flexible platform, available to all countries seeking sustained international attention and support to their sustaining peace efforts. I also welcome the PBC's ongoing efforts to strengthen its synergies with principal organs, including by enhancing its advisory role to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. That was a key objective of my January event, at which the Secretary-General, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, the then-President of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council joined me in addressing Member States.

"This morning I also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792), and its commitment to providing catalytic, rapid-response and flexible support to sustaining peace. In 2016, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund approved $70.9 million for 17 countries that are integrating United Nations strategies in support of sustaining peace. I am pleased to note that the Fund has exceeded the United Nations-wide commitment to allocating at least 15 per cent of resources to women's empowerment, by reaching 20 per cent of its total investments in that area. Against those achievements, I note that the resolutions on sustaining peace call on the Secretary-General to provide options for securing adequate, sustainable financing for peacebuilding in his upcoming report on sustaining peace in 2018. That matter will be considered further during the Assembly's seventy-second session as we work together to address the urgent need to invest in prevention and in creating the conditions required to sustain peace."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya in his capacity as former Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya): It is a great pleasure to be here today to present the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its tenth session (A/71/768). I would like to congratulate the Chair of the PBC at its eleventh session, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, for the dextrous manner with which he has continued to steer the affairs of the Commission, and to all members of the PBC for their continued commitment to the work of the Commission.

The report before us reflects policy and country-specific activities that the Commission conducted in 2016, a year that was marked by the adoption of the twin resolutions 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), on the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. In addition to reaffirming the critical role of the Peacebuilding Commission, the resolutions introduce the concept of "sustaining peace", which, inter alia, emphasizes conflict prevention, the primacy of politics, national ownership and inclusiveness and reaffirms the important role of women and youth in peacebuilding efforts.

The tenth session marked a very productive year for the Commission, as it built on the momentum generated by the twin resolutions to further improve the relevance, effectiveness and flexibility of the Commission. And today I wish to highlight four areas covered in the

annual report that underscore the progress made during the tenth session.

First, on flexibility, with the consent of all concerned countries, the Commission convened a range of country-specific regional and thematic discussions beyond the six country-configuration formulas with which the PBC is currently engaged. The PBC continued its consideration of peacebuilding opportunities and challenges in West Africa, including the Chair's visit to the region to explore the subregional peacebuilding opportunities and challenges following the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic. Throughout that, the Commission provided an important platform for improving coherence among different stakeholders and at the same time for addressing cross-border and subregional challenges. The Chair also engaged the African Union Peace and Security Council on issues of mutual interest and potential areas for future cooperation, as required by the twin resolutions.

The Commission started the work of the Peacebuilding Fund, which made it possible to convene, in October, a meeting to study the results of the Peacebuilding Fund engagement in Kyrgyzstan with senior representatives of the Kyrgyz Government. This provided an opportunity for the country to discuss the progress made in reconciliation and peacebuilding, thanks to the support of the Peacebuilding Fund. Activities such as these represent important ways to further strengthen the strategies between the PBC and the Fund.

Secondly, on deeper partnerships and more coherence, we focused on the importance of regional and subregional organizations as key partners in peacebuilding efforts. The involvement of senior representatives of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Development Programme further enriched our discussions. It was a good step forward in the Commission's efforts to enhance coherence within the United Nations system around matters of peacebuilding. Throughout the tenth session, the Commission also made important progress in building stronger relations with international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, particularly the African Union, and the entire United Nations system. I urge the Commission to continue in that direction and look for other opportunities to strengthen its collaboration with civil society and the private sector.

Thirdly, with respect to financing for peacebuilding, the United Nations has a unique tool at its disposal for supporting conflict-affected countries and preventing violent conflicts. The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund is an example of such a tool, and for it to be truly effective, the Peacebuilding Fund needs to work synergistically with the PBC, and the two entities' work must be mutually reinforcing. In this regard, during the tenth session, we had several opportunities to build on these very synergies. The meeting on financing for peacebuilding in Kyrgyzstan, which I mentioned earlier, is only one example of how the Commission can draw attention to the work of the Peacebuilding Fund, and I invite other countries that are receiving funds from the Peacebuilding Fund to come forward and use the PBC as a platform to present their success stories.

I would like to stress the importance of investing in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Kenya, alongside Mexico, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sweden and the United Kingdom, organized a pledging conference for the Peacebuilding Fund. Although the total amount pledge fell short of our intended target of $300 million, the conference was well received. The conference sent an important political statement to Member States and the United Nations that they should seek solutions for long-term financing for peacebuilding efforts. I am glad to note that under the chairmanship of the Republic of Korea the Commission is continuing in this effort by having the theme of this year's session be "Financing for peacebuilding".

Fourthly, on working methods, the Commission achieved important results with regard to formulating relevant reference documents to guide its work. In September 2016, the Peacebuilding Commission became the first intergovernmental body to adopted a gender strategy. The strategy, which is the outcome of a process initiated by my predecessor, is an important tool to help guide the work of the Commission on gender-related aspects of peacebuilding. It also reiterates the important role women have to play in peacebuilding and in sustaining peace. In an effort to make the Commission more effective and more efficient, it conducted a review of its rules of procedure and working methods during its tenth session. This was in line with requirements in the twin resolutions mentioned earlier.

Beyond these four points there is a lot more that the Commission did in 2016 in support of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including through its country-specific

activities, as indicated in the annual report before us. The value of the Peacebuilding Commission rests in its ability to engage with a broad range of stakeholders and partners to reinforce its bridging role among the principal organs and entities of the United Nations and provide advice to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council when and as requested. I believe that by strengthening its convening role and providing advice, the Commission can become truly effective and relevant in contributing to peacebuilding and the nexus of sustaining peace and sustaining development.

In its forward agenda, the annual report sets forth important priorities that the Commission will address in 2017. I am confident that, under the capable leadership of the Republic of Korea, the Peacebuilding Commission will continue to evolve in a positive manner.

Finally, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Fernández-Taranco and his entire team at the Peacebuilding Support Office for their support to my delegation and to the entire PBC throughout the tenth session and their dedication to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

In conclusion, I would like to make a brief statement in my national capacity as the representative of Kenya. I commend the Secretary-General for prioritizing the prevention and sustaining of peace during his inaugural address to the Security Council (see S/PV.7857). I also commend President Thomson for convening an important and timely high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly under the theme "Building sustainable peace for all: synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace". We believe that it is an indicator that the Peacebuilding Commission agenda is in full alignment with the current vision of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea in his capacity as Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): Let me start by congratulating Ambassador Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya, on his strong leadership and the commitment with which he successfully led the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) as its Chair last year. He worked tirelessly to lay the grounds for a stronger PBC while also testing and spearheading a number of innovations. I am grateful to be able to count on his support, as well as that of Ambassador Gómez Camacho, Permanent Representative of Mexico, as Vice-Chairs of the PBC this year.

This annual debate of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace is of particular importance since we will soon be celebrating the first anniversary of the adoption of resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, by the General Assembly and Security Council, respectively.

I agree with what has just been said by my predecessor, that the PBC has made significant achievements since last April. Indeed, the PBC has continued to bring attention to the importance of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. To mention just a few initiatives, in January the Chair of the Commission participated in a high-level event that President Thomson organized, under the theme "Building sustainable peace for all: synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace".

In March, the Commission met in response to a request from the Security Council to support the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in advancing the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. At the request of the Gambian Government, the Commission convened a meeting just yesterday to discuss the peacebuilding priorities of the Gambia, following my visit to the country last March in my capacity as PBC Chair, which was joined by Assistant Secretary-General Fernández-Taranco of the Peacebuilding Support Office and Ambassador Tangara of the Gambia.

The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, which recognized the unique role of the PBC in bringing steady international attention to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, have provided a timely opportunity to re-energize the Commission, improve its advisory role to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and, ultimately, enhance its support for countries that are striving to build and sustain peace. I intend to make the PBC more proactive in mainstreaming all peacebuilding and sustaining peace objectives and tasks throughout the work of the Commission and the United Nations system as a whole.

Looking ahead, there are a number of priorities for the Commission during its eleventh session, which I will briefly enumerate.

First of all, we must consider partnership. Partnerships and cooperation with relevant stakeholders, both within and outside the United Nations, are crucial. The Commission should seize all available opportunities to strengthen its collaboration, especially with international financial institutions, including the World Bank, and with regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union. We will continue to look at opportunities to engage with organizations from other regions, including Latin America and Asia. In addition, the Commission will further enhance its collaboration with civil-society organizations and the private sector. The annual session of the PBC, to be held on 22 June, will be an excellent opportunity to convene a broad range of actors and discuss practical ways in which we can work together.

Within the United Nations, we need to further explore ways to improve the quality of advice we provide to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. In recent months, the Security Council asked the PBC to advise it on a number of regional and country-specific issues, including the Sahel, the Central African Republic, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau. I believe that those are good opportunities for the Commission to prove that it can provide solid and comprehensive advice upon request from the principal organs of the United Nations.

Secondly, we need predictable financing. Financing represents a key element of peacebuilding, and we must ensure its predictability moving forward. That is why the Commission will focus its annual session in June on that important topic and discuss ways to ensure more predictable financing through stronger partnerships with other stakeholders, including international financial institutions and the private sector. In that regard, the importance of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) cannot be overemphasized. Synergies between the Commission and the PBF are improving, and a number of countries that receive funds from the PBF have expressed interest in accessing the PBC as a platform to engage with the broader international community.

As preparations to issue the Secretary-General's report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace are under way, the PBC will be ready to provide a platform where the Secretariat can engage Member States and exchange views on a broad set of issues related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including options on financing.

Thirdly, we must focus on gender. The Commission will continue to build on the achievements of the past year to promote the gender dimension of peacebuilding with a focus on the need to increase the participation of women in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. To that end, in 2016 the Commission adopted a gender strategy that is now being integrated into the work of the PBC, and has recently appointed focal points on gender, as well as on youth, financing, institution-building and national ownership, to ensure that the PBC takes those themes into account throughout its activities.

Fourth and finally, with respect to transparency and efficiency, the Commission will continue to work towards more flexible working methods so that it can respond in a rapid and effective manner to an increasing number of requests for advice and support.

In conclusion, we look forward to a fruitful and productive discussion at today's annual debate of the General Assembly, which provides an important opportunity for the wider United Nations membership to reflect on an increasingly significant aspect of the renewed efforts of the United Nations to build and sustain peace across the globe.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson (European Union): I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank you, Sir, for having convened today's debate revolving around the annual reports of the Peacebuilding Commission on its tenth session (A/71/768) and on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792). This represents an excellent occasion to take stock of the achievements made over the past 12 months. I particularly thank Ambassador Kamau for his briefing.

The year 2016 marked an important milestone in the existence and work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations peace and security architecture as a whole. Almost one year ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted the identical resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively, on the

review of the peacebuilding architecture. They were the most comprehensive resolutions on peacebuilding that the United Nations has adopted so far. They clearly defined the concept of sustaining peace, acknowledging that it involves all stages of the cycle of conflict and should flow through all three pillars of the engagement of the United Nations. Peacebuilding should therefore no longer be seen as a post-conflict activity, as the challenge of sustaining peace runs across the complete cycle of our engagement.

Today, we are faced with a rising number of violent conflicts in the world. The failure to sustain peace is part of the reason we are faced with that challenge. In fact, 90 per cent of conflict onsets in the first decade of the twenty-first century took place in contexts that had experienced conflict before. Given that recurrent nature of violent conflict, sustaining peace equals conflict prevention in many cases. We therefore welcome the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on conflict prevention, as well as the clear imperative for all of us to work as hard as we can, collectively, on finally getting prevention right — because we know that we have often failed on many fronts. The Secretary-General has said that trillions of dollars are spent destroying societies and economies. The human suffering we are currently witnessing is immense, and frankly, shameful.

It is therefore no longer a question of agreeing on the principle that prevention is better than firefighting and that sustaining efforts for peace reduces human and financial costs immensely in the long run. We know we must develop a political culture of acting sooner in response to the risk of violent conflict, and we must act together if we want to have any chance of success.

The European Union's new global strategy emphasizes the importance of acting promptly on prevention while also responding responsibly and decisively to crises, investing in stabilization and avoiding premature disengagement. It also emphasizes the importance of an integrated and comprehensive approach to conflict that starts with joint analysis; that brings to bear all the tools at our disposal to address conflict; that addresses the various interconnected levels of conflict; and that emphasizes the commitment of the EU to working through the multilateral system, with the United Nations at its core.

The global strategy promises that the EU will engage in a practical and principled way in sustaining peace, taking an integrated approach. Building on its comprehensive approach and working in the same interconnected manner that is also embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals, the EU is stepping up efforts and capabilities to further strengthen the way we bring together institutions, expertise and instruments, and work with Member States on prevention, resolution and stabilization.

It is by now well established common knowledge that security and development are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The link permeates the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building and sustaining peace is inescapably linked to inclusive development, resilience and human rights. Long-term structural policies are not a luxury in times of many crises. Peaceful and inclusive societies, good governance, the rule of law, an independent judiciary, a reliable police force and a public sector without corruption are the best guarantors of sustainable peace and sustainable development, providing people with the means to lead secure and fulfilling lives at home. Sustaining peace requires that human rights and fundamental freedoms be respected, protected and fulfilled.

We also need to develop more creative approaches to diplomacy. That includes the continued promotion of women's roles in peace efforts. Women indeed need to be at the forefront of creating and sustaining peace, from the local to the international levels, if we want to have any chance of succeeding. In that regard, we welcome the adoption by the PBC of its own gender strategy to help guide its work on gender-related issues of sustaining peace.

I turn now to the two annual reports before us today. Both are comprehensive documents, illustrating the complexity of peacebuilding challenges. We appreciate the efforts of the PBC Organizational Committee and the Peacebuilding Support Office to provide an assessment of the PBC's work in pursuing its forward agenda for 2015. The EU welcomes the wider focus of the PBC beyond the countries on its agenda, as well as the regional approach. We also welcome the work of the PBC in the implementation of the recommendations of the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

The EU has also been a full member of all country-specific configurations of the PBC since their inception and is trying to provide the best support possible for their success. There is a clear role for the PBC when it engages with countries that undergo a transition period.

The PBC is already working on ways to respond better to challenges identified by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators and other actors. In doing so, it can significantly contribute to the one United Nations vision.

Turning to the performance of the country-specific configurations over the past year, there is good progress to report. We commend the efforts of all configuration chairs. Nevertheless, many challenges remain to be tackled. This is particularly true for Burundi, where the dynamics continue on a downward spiral and illustrate the need for additional preventive measures, political attention and engagement to prevent a recurrence of violent conflict. Guinea-Bissau is also a case in point, with the continuing political stalemate increasing the risk of instability and socioeconomic deterioration in that country.

The Peacebuilding Fund has achieved significant results and continues to have an important catalytic role. It remains a small-scale strategic fund that has to be followed by longer-term commitments from other financing sources, which may be bilateral or multilateral, including multilateral and regional development banks. For its part, the EU has already engaged in joint funding for peacebuilding projects via our Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and is open to exploring further opportunities for joint funding. With regard to securing more predictable financing for peacebuilding, the EU stands ready to discuss options on financing at the seventy-second session of the Assembly on the basis of the proposals to be made by the Secretary-General.

Before concluding, I would like to extend my gratitude to the former Chair of the PBC, Ambassador Kamau of Kenya, whom I would like to thank for his commitment and the excellent work he has done. We also look forward to continue working hand in hand with the current Chair, Ambassador Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea, the entire PBC membership and the Peacebuilding Support Office to move things forward.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): I thank you, Sir, for convening this joint debate on the very important topic of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as on the reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768) and the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792).

I also thank the Secretary-General for his report on the peacebuilding fund, of which Sri Lanka is a close partner and a beneficiary. It is heartening to see in the report that, despite concerns over funding levels, the Peacebuilding Fund has registered remarkable achievements during the past year.

We believe that the concept of sustaining peace should be at the core of our efforts at the United Nations to prevent conflicts and bring peace to the world. It encompasses all dimensions of prevention and peace, including conflict prevention, effective peacebuilding, addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring non-recurrence. If we are to apply this concept in our efforts, it has the potential to help in saving precious human lives from the horrors of conflict and war in these challenging times. In short, sustaining peace is essentially about prevention.

Secretary-General António Guterres has said that "prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority". We fully subscribe to this view. If prevention is the priority, it is imperative that we commit ourselves to sustaining peace wholeheartedly. In this regard, we welcome the High-level Dialogue on Building Sustainable Peace for All, convened by the President of the General Assembly in January. The Dialogue gave useful insights into the synergies between the sustainable development agenda and sustaining peace. As was stressed by many speakers at that event, sustaining peace is not an alien concept imposed upon States, but an inclusive, people-centred, nationally driven and owned process. We too subscribe to this view.

As a country emerging from conflict, Sri Lanka is well poised to reflect on the enormous suffering that conflict brought about. This awareness has spurred us to commit ourselves to post-conflict peacebuilding and sustaining peace with utmost dedication. This is indeed the underlying rationale for our unrelenting support to the agenda for sustaining peace and joining the Group of Friends of Sustaining Peace, a growing group of countries that is committed to promoting that agenda.

The implementation of the concept of sustaining peace worldwide, in our view, will require a concerted and coordinated effort from the entire United Nations system, all Member States and other stakeholders. In short, the task of sustaining peace needs sustained international attention and assistance. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Sri Lanka has just pledged a contribution to the joint project of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the United Nations Office for Project Services, which aims at better

communicating the concept of sustaining peace among various stakeholders.

We strongly believe that measures to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict need a coherent, integrated and coordinated approach. The approach must be adopted by the entire United Nations system, Member States and other stakeholders. As we expounded during the High-Level Dialogue on sustainable peace in January, sustaining peace is also linked to development. Sustainable peace and sustainable development are inextricably linked and interdependent. We have recognized this and Sri Lanka's post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts are consonant with our path to sustainable development.

The Government of Sri Lanka is very much committed to sustaining peace. Our efforts in post-conflict reconciliation are essentially aimed towards conflict prevention and building sustainable peace. We remain committed to preventing a relapse into conflict and building sustainable peace, notwithstanding certain challenges which arise in the milieu of democratic politics. The measures that we have identified to bring about post-conflict reconciliation consist of truth-seeking, justice, reparation and measures for guaranteeing non-recurrence. In this process, we are addressing the grievances of all victims, which remain at the core of these efforts.

Some of the key milestones in our efforts to usher in sustainable peace in Sri Lanka consists of an inclusive process to draw up a new constitution that would guarantee the rights of all Sri Lankans, the drawing up of a national human rights action plan and the passage of legislation to set up a permanent office for missing persons to bring about a sense of closure for those affected by the conflict. The report of the Consultation Task Force, which sought the views of the public on transitional justice mechanisms, is presently being studied to determine the appropriate mechanisms for truth-seeking, reparations, justice and non-recurrence. This exercise was supported by the funds provided by the Peacebuilding Fund.

The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation is working on a national policy on reconciliation. The Office is also working on reform of the education sector with a view to inculcating in our children the importance of pluralism, thereby contributing to national reconciliation. The Office is also providing training to leaders of interfaith groups and clergy in peacebuilding in order to use them as early-warning mechanisms to defuse potential conflict situations. In these efforts, we are closely engaging with the Peacebuilding Support Office. It is imperative that the Peacebuilding Support Office be further strengthened to carry out the agenda for sustaining peace. I also appreciate the assistance extended by the Peacebuilding Fund to Sri Lanka's initial peacekeeping projects and for the Peacebuilding Priority Plan.

Since the declaration by the Secretary-General of Sri Lanka's eligibility to receive funds from the Peacebuilding Fund in 2015, the Fund's total commitment to Sri Lanka has amounted to $12.3 million. Of this, $7 million is being earmarked for the Peacebuilding Priority Plan.

Last year's resolution 70/262, on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, rightly identified the dire need for adequate, predictable and sustained financing for the United Nations peacebuilding efforts. As a beneficiary of the Peacebuilding Fund, we worked closely with the Peacebuilding Support Office to address the issue of the Fund being hampered by decreasing contributions. As was just mentioned by the former Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Kamau, we co-hosted with several other States a donor pledging conference to refinance the Fund during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly last year.

The report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund reiterates that the agenda for sustaining peace compels a redoubling of effort on the part not only of the Fund, so as to ensure that its resources are used to greatest effect, but also of Member States, to ensure that they match their clear-cut political support for the Fund with adequate and sustainable financing. In this context, Sri Lanka stands fully behind the agenda for sustaining peace and would support all efforts of the United Nations to promote it.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): This debate on the two annual reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768) and on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792) are different from those we have had in previous years. Indeed, the adoption of the two identical resolutions, General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), was a new start and an unprecedented development in terms of strengthening and coordinating United Nations

peacebuilding efforts. This is in fact a 10-year review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, focusing on various policies, factors and mechanisms of sustaining peace. This is a new approach that has allowed us to address emerging challenges and to see the links between sustaining peace, conflict resolution and sustainable development. It is in that context that we can apply the concept of sustaining peace.

My delegation would like to reiterate the following points.

First of all, we must continue our debates on establishing an understanding among all delegations of the term of "sustaining peace" and address any concerns that might exist regarding the use and the meaning of this term. It is therefore important to focus this debate on how that concept can be practically applied within the context of each conflict and in line with the national needs of each country. We must also keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits all solution that would apply to all conflicts.

Second, we must make use of all tools available to the United Nations to respond to crisis situations. We must do this using an approach that seeks solutions instead of just managing ongoing conflicts. We must also develop our tool kit for implementing and examining peacekeeping and preventative diplomacy mandates, as well as actions to strengthen institutions and national capacities. Such tools would help to ensure peace in the medium and long terms.

Third, along the same lines, it is important to develop the analytical capacity of the Secretariat so that it may respond to developments in various countries emerging from conflict. We believe that reform of the peacebuilding architecture should include a vision to strengthen the Secretariat. The United Nations must have this shared analytical capacity in order to be able to assess the various conflicts and the contexts of each. In that way, we can find solutions that are adapted to each unique situation. Such an analytical, flexible approach would allow us to strengthen the capacity of the Peacebuilding Commission, helping it to play its consultative role alongside the General Assembly and the Security Council, and to find the best ways to address each conflict.

Fourth, we must strengthen the regional approach in order to find comprehensive solutions to regional issues, in particular in the Sahel region in Africa. Developing influential partnerships with regional and subregional organizations is absolutely essential if we want to take a strong regional approach to addressing transnational challenges. We should therefore assess and develop partnerships with the African Union and the League of Arab States.

Fifth, the Commission has adopted a gender strategy, which is an important step in the Commission's sectoral and conceptual work. The role of women is a crucial one. It strengthens inclusivity in building and sustaining peace. My delegation believes it is important to review the strategy after two or three years of its implementation in various contexts in order to draw lessons and improve its performance.

Sixth, building and sustaining peace in countries emerging from conflict should take place in parallel with the launch of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development plans. They all share the same goal of achieving justice, democracy and the rule of law in countries suffering from disease and famine, and where the foundation for a dignified life is lacking. That is why we insist on and reiterate the importance of the bridging role that the Commission plays between the various bodies.

Seventh and finally, predictable financing for sustaining peace remains a major challenge. Means of financing must be found. Such mechanisms should be based on broad partnerships between the United Nations, financial institutions and bilateral donors. Taking risks is the price to be paid for this valuable investment in building and sustaining peace. We see a major role in that regard for the Peacebuilding Fund and donors in finding the funds necessary to finance these efforts.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the convening of this meeting, which will provide us with a dual opportunity to take stock of the activities of the peacebuilding architecture during the previous year through our consideration of the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768), and to look ahead into the current year by identifying the aspects to be refined and the gaps to be filled in the framework of our actions within the Commission and the configurations.

I would like to congratulate Kenya on its successful chairmanship over the past year, which has resulted in a more than gratifying assessment, and to pay special tribute to my friend Ambassador Kamau, who led in a

way that was conducive to success and who has worthily represented the African continent.

I would like to assure the Chairman of the Commission, Ambassador Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea, of my delegation's full support and cooperation for the success of his mandate.

The year 2016 was a pivotal one in the evolution of peacebuilding. Thanks to the contributions of Member States, a new concept, vision and dynamic have emerged of the consolidation of peace, a fundamental United Nations responsibility. Indeed, the emergence of the concept of lasting peace, which has become omnipresent in virtually all discussions and debates within the Organization, has contributed substantially to bringing a new dynamic to its work in terms of the constant search for lasting balance between three fundamental pillars: development, security and human rights.

In adopting resolution 70/262, Member States expressed their support for the key idea of adopting a comprehensive and holistic approach to conflict prevention in order to ensure lasting peace; addressing the lack of coherence in United Nations system peacebuilding activities; ensuring that peacebuilding processes are not linear and that they take into account the specificity of each country; demanding predictable, sustainable and adequate financial resources to deal with the root causes of conflicts; and strengthening United Nations collaboration with regional and subregional organizations, as well as with international financial institutions.

It has become evident to the international community that, after decades of effort and sacrifice to bring peace to the four corners of the globe, the great obstacle to achieving peace is precisely its inability to withstand tension and recurring destabilizing events. The work of the Commission, as so accurately reflected in the annual report (A/71/768) under consideration today, points to the share of the responsibility that United Nations actors bear in that state of affairs by denouncing the compartmentalization of the various bodies and the narrow prism through which peacebuilding has been perceived thus far.

The annual report rightly reflects the full scope of the Commission's activities, whether as a platform for advocating the causes of fragile countries and mobilizing the funds necessary for their recovery, or as an advisory body capable of providing valuable advice and recommendations to key United Nations organs, not to mention the adoption of a gender strategy and good practices in terms of working methods.

Allow me to turn now to the situation in the Central African Republic and its Peacebuilding Commission country-specific configuration, which I have the honour to chair.

More than a year after President Faustin Archange Touadéra was elected following a peaceful electoral process, which was described as transparent and inclusive, much progress has been made, although the security situation remains volatile. Contrary to what we have seen in the past, the work of the Configuration is now based on a reference document, the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan 2017-2021, prepared by the Central African authorities in collaboration with the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank. This strategic document, on which the Brussels conference was based, has contributed to the success of the conference, at which pledges of more than $2.2 billion out of the $3 billion needed over five years were announced.

The configuration is trying to closely monitor the implementation of the recovery plan to encourage donors to pay for their commitments as soon as possible. The Brussels conference also saw the signing of another important document, the Cadre d'engagement, which governs relations between the Central African Republic and the international community. In that regard, the configuration will closely follow the evolution of the implementation of this important commitment mechanism.

This year, the configuration mobilized its support for the electoral process and the promotion of the recovery plan of the Brussels conference. More recently, on 16 March, the configuration organized a meeting attended by the President of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga; and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane. At the meeting, we approved the programme of work of the configuration to facilitate the implementation of the national plan for recovery and peace consolidation. The President of the Central African Republic had the opportunity to thank the members of the configuration and to describe his Government's peacebuilding

priorities in accordance with the national plan for recovery. He also stressed the importance of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security-sector reform processes, without which all efforts would be doomed to failure. In particular, he highlighted the political and financial challenges that threaten the implementation of these two processes.

On the occasion of the presence of the President of the Republic in New York, the United Kingdom presidency of the Security Council organized a debate on the Central African Republic (see S/PV.7901). On that occasion, I underscored the importance of cooperation and cohesion between the work of the Security Council and the Commission, stressing the role that the Commission can play in supporting the work of the Council. In that regard, we commend Egypt for its commitment as a focal point, as well as all the members of the Commission that are members of the Council and working to strengthen the relationship between the Commission and the Security Council. I intend to visit the Central African Republic soon, at the invitation of the President of the Republic, whom I thank. We are consulting with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the Peacebuilding Support Office to ensure that the dates of that mission are in line with the timetable of the Security Council.

Concerning the Peacebuilding Fund, we welcome the fact that the need to strengthen synergies between the Fund and the Commission has been highlighted in the annual report (A/71/792). Indeed, the Peacebuilding Fund, which is doing remarkable work in many countries, would benefit from greater communication about its projects. Further coordination with the country-specific configurations would strengthen the coherency of the Fund's efforts.

We welcome the fact that the activities of the Fund in the Central African Republic are already aligned with the two commitment instruments. In 2016, a community violence reduction initiative, implemented by the International Organization for Migration under the leadership of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, provided temporary employment to approximately 2,000 ex-Séléka combatants and members of communities to which they returned. In addition, the Fund supported the restoration of public security and basic services, including the rehabilitation and equipping of administrative buildings, in the prefectures of Obo and Birao. An important package of support from the Peacebuilding Fund for fighting impunity, reforming the security sector and promoting political dialogue will be rolled out soon to help kick-start the implementation of the national plan and the Cadre d'engagement.

Finally, I would like to stress the importance of communication and note that, unfortunately, the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and its configurations is not receiving the attention that should or could be given to them. For example, at the latest configuration meeting on 16 March, at which the President of the Central African Republic was present, only one photo was published on the United Nations peacebuilding Twitter account reporting the President's presence at a meeting of the Commission. It is important that the activities of the Commission and its configurations be shared with the general public in order to compensate for the Commission's lack of visibility and to increase the attention given to its activities and its many accomplishments.

I cannot conclude my remarks without congratulating the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission on his dedication and efforts, as well as the Chairs of the country-specific configurations of the Commission, for their efforts and support. My sincere thanks also go to the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations; to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga and his team; to the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, my friend Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco; and to the entire support team of the Peacebuilding Commission, which in spite of the limited means at their disposal are working selflessly to carry out their tasks, and I congratulate them.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala thanks Secretary-General António Guterres and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for the submission of the reports before us. We also thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate.

My delegation is pleased to note that, with the submission of the reports of the Secretary-General (A/71/792) and the PBC (A/71/768), General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) on the review of the peacebuilding structure are being implemented. The General Assembly agreed by consensus — and I stress the felicitous fact that

it was by consensus — that sustainable peace should be understood as a goal and a process in order to build a common vision of society, ensuring that the needs of all sectors of the population are taken into account. This vision is inclusive and cross-cutting, as it covers activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, intensification, continuation and recurrence of conflicts.

Guatemala believes that the concept of sustainable peace assumes that it is not necessary to engage in intergovernmental negotiations to collectively define whether peacebuilding should be implemented before conflicts break out and not only during or in a post-conflict situations, since clearly what is positive and new is that we must address prevention and not the consequences of conflict. We therefore welcome any initiative aimed at strengthening the PBC, its convening and liaison role, and its partnerships with other stakeholders, including international financial institutions, in order to have a more flexible and effective Peacebuilding Commission.

My delegation welcomes the fact that the Organizational Committee has begun to consider its provisional rules of procedure and working methods in order to give it more flexibility and effectiveness in its work. We welcome the fact that the Committee has held consultations that have led to a document with applicable measures based on good practices. We therefore look forward to recommendations, which will require a more detailed debate among the members of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Considering the close links between development, peace and security and human rights, Guatemala welcomes the PBC's exploration of ways to strengthen its consultative and liaison role with the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. But beyond holding debates in the Organization's various forums, we believe that the concept of sustainable peace should be implemented in accordance with the mandates of each of these forums and the indicated resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

We recognize the importance of continuing to work on the relationship between peace and development, as different forums have emphasized the investment in prevention implicit in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which is key to carrying out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and vice versa, since the 2030 Agenda as a whole can contribute to sustaining peace before, during and after conflicts.

We recall that, despite our concern about the low level of funding, the Peacebuilding Fund has achieved remarkable achievements in 2016, including the goal established in the Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding by allocating 15 per cent of resources to women's empowerment. In that connection, Guatemala is one of the countries that has benefited from that Fund in previous years. In September 2016, the Peacebuilding Fund approved a project to strengthen national capacity to combat impunity by focusing on the investigative capacity of the Public Prosecutor's Office in cases involving illegal groups, clandestine organizations and in cases of femicide and corruption. In addition, at the end of 2016, a second phase of investment totalling $9 million was approved. It focuses on transitional justice, including support for indigenous women who have survived gender violence and institutional dialogue on conflict.

Finally, Guatemala endorses the statement made by the Secretary-General in his report, warning that, in order to consolidate peace and stability at the national level, it is important to promote good governance, democracy and accountability. The joint effort of the Government of Guatemala and the United Nations has been fruitful and reflected in the strategic coordination between justice-sector institutions and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. That joint effort has had favourable results, such as with regard to the strengthening of the rule of law and justice-sector institutions and enhancing peaceful coexistence.

Mr. Lal (India): Today's debate is the first such annual review since the adoption last year of the substantively identical resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016) by the General Assembly and the Security Council, respectively, on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. Those resolutions defined the concept of sustaining peace, besides calling for the strengthening of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in various ways.

The report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768) provides a useful account of the activities of the Commission over the past year. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792), which gives a good overview of the Fund's situation and projects.

The complex and interlinked nature of various aspects of building and sustaining peace are now beginning to become much better understood. The perspective is increasingly expanding across the spectrum from prevention to resolution and reconciliation to recovery and reconstruction and the prevention of a relapse of conflict. The changing nature of conflict itself is evermore clear. Conflicts are increasingly intra-State and also involve non-State actors, including international terrorist networks. In an interdependent world, conflicts in any part of the world have much wider implications through such terrorist networks or large movements of refugees. We therefore have a collective interest in building and sustaining peace.

There is a clear recognition of the importance of comprehensive sustainable development, inclusive economic growth and political processes in preventing conflict, as well as of undertaking effective peacebuilding efforts. That also tells us the importance of long-term commitment and sustained investment, including vastly expanded funding, which are required for all-round development and inclusive political dialogue for building and sustaining peace.

While those complexities and interlinkages are much more widely understood, there is little political commitment for commensurate action and substantive support to peacebuilding efforts. The funding available for such efforts remains marginal, severely limiting the ability of the Peacebuilding Commission. As has been pointed out on earlier occasions, there is no agreement, even on increasing the funding for the Peacebuilding Commission to a 1 per cent level of that for peacekeeping operations annually. In the absence of funds, despite an understanding of the task at hand, there is little hope of its being achieved. At the same time, there are tendencies to reallocate the already grossly inadequate international development cooperation funds to humanitarian and other emergency assistance, further reducing overall development funding. That is not helping the longer-term development efforts required for peacebuilding.

As the report of the Secretary-General notes, the Peacebuilding Fund's financial health remains in question. The total amount of $71 million allocated in 2016 for 17 countries, including the six where the Peacebuilding Commission is active, is grossly inadequate for the scale of the tasks at hand. Despite the landmark resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council, the ministerial-level pledging conference in September last year could elicit only half of the $300 million goal that had been projected as the minimum amount needed to sustain operations for three years. India was among the countries that made a financial contribution.

In the context of these serious chronic constraints, the report of the Commission provides a useful account of its activities over the past year relating to six African nations. We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Commission to assist political reconciliation, build capacity in specific sectors, encourage donor funding, provide advice during the drawdown of peacekeeping operations and liaise with regional entities, such as the African Union, the East African Community and the Community of West African States. The deliberations conducted in different regions on cross-cutting issues and cross-border challenges, including issues relating to women and youth, are also important. Equally important is the Commission's engagement with the World Bank and other international financial institutions. We note that last year, 20 per cent of peacebuilding funds were allocated to women's empowerment and that the Fund launched its first-ever youth promotion initiative. The cross-border efforts of the Fund and its partnership with regional organizations and other multilateral funds are positive steps.

The complexity of peacebuilding activities also points to the need for greater coherence, not only among various United Nations organs but also among related agencies and special and regional bodies. It is equally important that the Commission continue to discuss ways to ensure stronger synergies between the Commission and the Fund. It is essential for peacebuilding efforts to be aligned with national priorities and participation. That would ensure sustainable gains and ownership. India continues to expand its development cooperation initiatives with a large number of partners, including those in Africa. They range from education to skill development, capacity-building in terms of institutional strengths, technology collaboration in varied areas, from agriculture to digital technologies for economic growth and sustainable development.

The High-level Dialogue on Building Sustainable Peace for All, convened by the President of the General Assembly in January, was an important step in garnering support for the issue and in exploring the synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace. India participated actively in the

dialogue. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission since its inception, India stands ready to strengthen the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening today's joint debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792).

As we all know, the Peacebuilding Commission was created simultaneously by resolutions 60/180 and 1645 (2005) of the General Assembly and the Security Council, respectively, to achieve the very ambitious goal of bringing together all those interested in marshalling resources to assist States in post-conflict situations so that they no longer fall victim to violence, and to put forward integrated strategies for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, inter alia. The Assembly will also recall that one of the flagship objectives of the new Commission was to identify best practices and to assist in obtaining predictable funding for the first set of social and community rehabilitation activities and to extend the time frame for the international community's post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Without providing details about the activities of the Commission during its tenth session, which are well outlined in the reports being considered today, my delegation would like to say a few words about some of the salient aspects of the report. I will of course refer to my country, Burundi, which, as the Assembly knows, has been on the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda since 2006.

With regard to peacebuilding and sustaining peace and opportunities and challenges, I am pleased to recall that, on 27 April 2016, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted identical substantive resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. In particular, the resolutions called on the PBC to evaluate the progress made in implementing provisions relating to its working methods and its provisional rules of procedure, while encouraging that consideration be given to the possibility of diversifying its working methods so as to increase the efficiency and flexibility of efforts to sustain peace.

The Assembly will also recall that the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council define sustaining peace as a goal and a process for developing a shared vision of society that takes into account the needs of all groups within the population, as well as activities to prevent the emergence, intensification, continuance or recurrence of conflicts, and to address their root causes in order to help parties to end hostilities, ensure national reconciliation and embark decisively on the path of sustainable development. In addition, in the resolutions the General Assembly and the Security Council also requested the strengthening of the Commission itself, and, above and beyond its country-specific activities, of its role as a common space for all relevant actors, its liaison functions and its partnerships with other stakeholders, including international financial institutions. They also called for improved intergovernmental cohesion and partnerships, as well as coherent polices and operations.

With regard to the implementation of the resolutions, we welcome the fact that the Commission has continued to take action on the situation in Burundi. Since the outbreak of the political crisis in Burundi in 2015 until the recent return to normalcy, the Commission has tried, as far as possible, to continue to assist the Burundian population at a particularly difficult time. During his visits to Burundi and the region, the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, His Excellency Ambassador Jürg Lauber, worked with national authorities and stakeholders to encourage Burundians to find a peaceful solution to the crisis with the assistance of regional and international partners, such as the African Union, the East African Community and neighbouring countries.

During his two visits to Burundi and the region, the Chair of the configuration also met with Tanzanian authorities, our immediate neighbours, representatives of the African Union and the lead mediator of the East African Community, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to stress the importance of a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding based on the three pillars of the United Nations system, as described in particular in resolution 60/251.

We also welcome the fact that the Burundi configuration has moved away from the political debate that seemed to dominate all meetings, to focus now on discussions on the economic implications of the 2015 political crisis in Burundi, through consultations in Geneva on the country's socioeconomic situation and briefings with officials of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Government departments responsible for economy and finance and representatives of the private sector in Burundi, which

are focused on relations between the Government and its international partners.

We encourage the configuration to move forward by properly playing its role as a bridge between Burundi and its partners, some of whom disengaged in 2015, following a misreading of the political situation in 2015. Today the Government of Burundi has a genuine desire to rebuild trust with its bilateral and multilateral partners. It is imperative that the configuration step up its efforts by embracing the willingness of the Government and its partners to open a new chapter after 2015, in order to encourage the resumption of cooperation in the areas that were highlighted in Geneva, such as education, health, food security, macroeconomic recovery and direct budgetary support.

With regard to regional issues, my delegation is encouraged by the fact that the Commission has continued to exercise flexibility and to rely on its Organizational Committee to plan debates on specific regions, countries or themes in support of the countries of the regions concerned in order to achieve lasting peace and to stress the need to further strengthen their partnership with the Commission. My delegation takes this opportunity once again to emphasize the importance of the regional dimension in the process of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The Commission is uniquely positioned to promote greater harmony among the subregional, regional, continental and international dimensions of the post-conflict response. The Commission's experience in Burundi has served to confirm that greater regional and subregional coherence is a key factor in supporting peacebuilding efforts. It is essential to continue to integrate and strengthen regional and subregional opportunities in the work of the Commission.

The experience of countries on the Commission's agenda over the past decade serves to underscore the relevance of the regional dimension. Indeed, many countries may prefer to receive assistance and advice from countries in their own regions, and regional organizations may be in a better position to respond in a timely manner and assist in decision-making in order to find solutions to sensitive issues. We welcome the fact that, during the reporting period, the Commission placed greater emphasis on the importance of strengthening regional coherence, which is essential to helping countries to maintain peace and to prevent them from falling victim to violence.

The political situation in Burundi in 2015 highlighted the fundamental role that neighbouring countries, the African Union and subregional organizations, such as the East African Community, can and should play as key partners in political processes and in combating factors that cause instability. The Commission therefore needs to further strengthen its collaboration with its African membership, in particular the immediate neighbours of the countries included on its agenda, the immediate neighbours of the countries of the East African Community, in the case of Burundi, and all of the countries involved in various peace agreement negotiations, as in the case of Burundi and South Africa.

Although the regional dimension was the focus during the period under review, at times, we have realized that it has not been wholly considered and that there is still room for improvement. At times, we have noted a real and profound gap between subregional and continental positions, on the one hand, and those of some non-African stakeholders here at United Nations Headquarters, on the other hand, with regard to reading the political situation in Burundi.

Logically, the United Nations and other partners outside the continent should fully align themselves with the positions of regional actors, who are better acquainted with the political history and culture of the countries concerned. For example, the most recent report of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi was diametrically opposed to all the reports on the very same situation from subregional organizations, such as the East African Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The first report was politically motivated and very alarmist on almost every point, while the second noted that there had been significant progress on the ground and acknowledged a few challenges that still needed to be addressed. The approach of analysing the same situation in different ways for the same period is far removed from the overall cohesion that we would like to strengthen within the Commission.

With regard to cross-cutting issues, my delegation welcomes ongoing meetings on the financing of peacebuilding, which began in 2015, in line with the Commission's founding resolutions. It should continue to address the issue of peacebuilding funding because, without the predictable resources required to finance and sustain quick-impact projects, all efforts to build peace could be thwarted. We are deeply concerned

that, despite the expressions of support and interest from several Member States involved in the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, the financial situation of the Peacebuilding Fund remains very fragile. The $152 million promised at the pledging conference in September 2016 is grossly insufficient to meet the growing assistance needs, which have reached unprecedented levels in recent years. We therefore call for international solidarity to finance the Peacebuilding Fund.

In the context of the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), on youth, peace and security, it is encouraging to see the Commission increasingly consider, in particular at its open debates, how young people can contribute to peacebuilding. The issue of massive investment in young people must remain at the centre of the Commission's priorities in order to find an alternative to violence. The Government of Burundi attaches great importance to young people, who seek to become agents for peace and development. It is against that backdrop that Burundi's most senior officials have since this morning been taking part in the 2017 National Youth Conference being held in the centre of the country.

With regard to women participating in politics in post-conflict periods, it is essential to consider the gender dimension of peacebuilding and accord it special attention and unwavering commitment. To start on the right foot, we believe that women must be allowed to participate in the process of conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of conflict, take part in peace negotiations and be part of the post-conflict transition process. That is even more beneficial and politically cost-effective because there is a clear link between women playing a genuine role in such activities and the effectiveness and long-term viability of such activities.

With respect to the synergy between the PBC and the main bodies of the General Assembly, my delegation welcomes the fact that throughout the tenth session the Commission has continued to explore ways to strengthen its consultative and bridge-building role with the General Assembly and the Security Council, first and foremost during the high-level thematic debate on the United Nations, peace and security convened by the President of the General Assembly on 10 and 11 May 2016. It is up to us to build on the current momentum in order to improve the synergy between the Commission and the principal bodies of the General Assembly. In that regard, my delegation encourages the participation of the Chairs of the country-specific configurations, not only at the briefings of the Security Council on the situation of the countries concerned, but also in the closed consultations that are often held following public briefings. Their contribution would be of great assistance to the Security Council, which would then be able to rely on sources of information other than the briefings of the Secretariat alone.

I cannot conclude my remarks without saying a few words about the importance of respecting national ownership in everything we do. Since the Commission was established, in 2005, the Governments of the countries on the agenda have been responsible for identifying the national priorities that could be addressed by peacebuilding projects. Nonetheless, 12 years later, we can still say that there are opportunities to do even more. Let us take the example of the political situation in Burundi. Some partners are quick to speak on issues that fall exclusively within the sovereign responsibility of the country. We must let the peoples of the world, the peoples of Africa and peoples elsewhere decide their own futures. The role of the international community should be limited solely to lending support through mutually beneficial partnerships.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya and Ambassador Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea for their statements, respectively, on the report (A/71/768) of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and on the report (A/71/792) on the Peacebuilding Fund. In particular, we thank Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco and his team for their excellent work on this issue.

The year 2016 was particularly important for the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. Although at the time my country was not a member of the Commission, it had an opportunity to actively engage in discussions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as in negotiations on the parallel resolutions of the Security Council and the Assembly General on the peacebuilding architecture and sustainable peace, which sparked new momentum in the Commission's work.

Since last January, we have participated in the PBC as a member of the Economic and Social Council, and have seen changes in its dynamics and approach to its work. Those changes were inspired by the findings, good practices and suggestions on working methods

included in the report presented today, which have our full support. In that regard, we welcome the quest for more flexible ways of fostering relations between the PBC and countries and regional organizations. Recent meetings on the Sahel and the Gambia are encouraging in that regard. The PBC is a platform that should be used in a dynamic and more extensive way in order to support countries and interested regional organizations in implementing their own peacebuilding priorities.

Peacebuilding activities must be the subject of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding. In that regard, based on the requests in the parallel resolutions on sustainable peace, we await the alternatives to be submitted by the Secretary-General ahead of the high-level meeting scheduled for the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. In addition, we reiterate our support for the recommendation to be made in due course by the Advisory Group of Experts on the Peacebuilding Architecture to allocate the sum of $100 million per year to the Peacebuilding Fund in assessed contributions to the Organization's budget. That is the minimum financial commitment that we should be willing to offer in that regard, as that sum is insufficient for meeting the sheer magnitude of peacebuilding efforts. Because we believe that that is imminent, last year Argentina began to participate as a voluntary contributor to the Fund.

The Organization is at a critical juncture for the practical implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the principles of the relevant resolutions on peacekeeping — a critical juncture that calls on the PBC to thoroughly implement its mandate, including, as we have said, a flexibility that allows going beyond regional configurations. As reflected in the annual reports presented at this joint debate, the resolutions mentioned bestow an important role to the Peacebuilding Commission and encourage it to be more effective, flexible and innovative, while also emphasizing its function as a bridge and enabler of consultations linking the work of the Organization concerning peace and security and those devoted to development, human rights and humanitarian assistance. In particular, we believe that the Commission can play an active role in supporting the Security Council in designing and evaluating mandates for peacekeeping operations, especially with regard to discussions on transitions towards missions and processes more tied to peacebuilding activities, for example, with regard to determining the level of resources for quick-impact projects or the aspects and tasks of the civil-affairs component of missions. We also believe that it can support the Economic and Social Council in monitoring compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals by conflict-affected countries.

In conclusion, we express our commitment to continue to work to help the PBC and Peacebuiding Fund take on an increasingly relevant role as instruments for conflict prevention as well as for peacebuilding and sustainable peace.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil): I thank the President for convening this joint debate to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792) and the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (A/71/768).

A year after the conclusion of the review of the peacebuilding architecture, today's debate is an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). As a remarkable achievement in the area of peace and security in recent years, the adoption of those resolutions is in line with the priority accorded by Secretary-General António Guterres to peace and prevention. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace can play a key role in turning that priority into reality. The resolutions strengthened the bridging role of the PBC, while taking into account the part it can play in helping to transcend the divisions among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Marking an evolution in relation to the original paradigm of peacebuilding, the concept of sustaining peace can contribute to enhancing our capacity to address what the Secretary-General identified as one of the most serious shortcomings of the international community — its inability to prevent crises. Therefore, we have to work to strengthen the concept of sustaining peace as a goal and a process aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation or recurrence of conflict. In doing so, we should not lose sight of our shared responsibility and the need for a unified approach through all three pillars of the United Nations.

My delegation expresses its gratitude for the excellent work carried out by Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. We would like to highlight, for instance, the efforts to strengthen the partnership between the Commission and regional and subregional organizations,

especially the African Union. We welcome, as well, the integration of a gender perspective into the work of the Commission through the adoption of its gender strategy. The Commission has also enhanced its coordination with the Security Council. The PBC continued to explore ways to enhance its advisory role to the Council by means of consultations, periodic stocktaking and formal briefings on country-specific and thematic issues. It is also of the utmost importance that all members of the Security Council contribute to the promotion of sustaining peace.

As the Secretary-General reminded us, the financial health of the Peacebuilding Fund remains in question, while the demand for its assistance has increased to historic levels. It is true that the peacekeeping budget has allocated resources to programmatic activities and that the United Nations development system has supported peacebuilding activities in countries affected by conflict. There have also been efforts to enhance cooperation with international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank. Nevertheless, resources from the United Nations regular budget are vital for the promotion of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which cannot rely only on voluntary contributions. Predictable funding is a prerequisite for supporting policies, such as on sustained economic growth, poverty eradication, social development, sustainable development, national reconciliation and the establishment of accountable institutions. In that regard, we look forward to the Secretary-General's report on options to increase, restructure and better prioritize funding allocated to peacebuilding activities, including through assessed contributions.

The Peacebuilding Commission should contribute to this debate by holding meetings on financing peacebuilding and sustaining peace, as well as briefings on the state of affairs of the Secretary-General's report. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of focal points and look forward to discussing that issue within the framework of the PBC.

We would like to express our full confidence in the work of Ambassador Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea in the implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. We concur with the strategies that he identified earlier in his statement of intent, in particular the need to mainstream the sustaining-peace agenda throughout the United Nations system and to redouble our efforts to ensure predictable financing for peacebuilding. Brazil is committed to sustaining peace and the implementation of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. We are ready to work for the enhancement of the United Nations engagement with peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Mrs. Gregoire-Van-Haaren (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes this joint debate, as well as the report (A/71/768) of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its tenth session and the report (A/71/792) of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF).

We align ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak and to reiterate the commitment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. We believe that the United Nations has a central role to play when it comes to peacebuilding. For that reason, we have actively participated in the PBC Organizational Committee and the Burundi configuration for many years. Moreover, the Netherlands also continues to be a top donor to the Peacebuilding Fund. Today I would like to focus on three points, namely, our appreciation for the reports under discussion, the importance of the sustaining-peace and United Nations reform agenda, and the question of financing.

The two annual reports under discussion today are both important and comprehensive documents. We particularly welcome the recommendations, good practices and lessons learned, as they offer concrete suggestions to further improve the impact of the work of both the PBC and the PBF. We would like to thank Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya for his dedication and achievements as last year's Chair of the PBC. We would also like to thank all the Chairs of the country-specific configurations for their work, in particular Ambassador Lauber of Switzerland for his efforts in the Burundi configuration, in which dialogue is maintained under difficult circumstances. The Netherlands welcomes the PBC's work on the implementation of the recommendations from the review of the peacebuilding architecture, including on its working methods. We believe that flexible agenda-setting and working regionally are positive developments. We also welcome enhanced cooperation with the World Bank, which can lead to synergies for both organizations. Moreover, we regard the

Peacebuilding Fund as an important instrument that can be used swiftly in high-risk situations.

Secondly, last September, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bert Koenders, was one of the co-hosts of the PBF pledging conference. In his speech, he stressed that, in essence, the question is whether we are a reliable partner for people in countries affected by conflict. For that, a unified United Nations is needed, working across the pillars of the United Nations and with the "delivering as one" initiative as a key priority. We see a special role for the United Nations development agencies to contribute to peace by implementing joint assessments and planning by humanitarian and development actors; ensuring that financing is sufficiently "un-earmarked" so that there is flexibility at the country level to direct it towards the root causes of conflict; prioritizing efforts in fragile and conflict-affected countries to allocate funding and invest in human resources; and, lastly, ensuring long-term financing.

Many speakers who spoke before me emphasized the importance of the implementation of the twin resolutions concerning the review of the peacebuilding architecture — Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). The Netherlands supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to achieve sustainable peace with an integrated approach to conflict, which is a priority for the United Nations. Action is needed and should primarily be aimed at improving results on the ground. We look forward to the Secretary-General's proposals to restructure the peace and security architecture and his report on the implementation of the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture at the General Assembly during its seventy-second session. We look forward to active engagement with Member States in that regard.

Lastly, I would like to stress the issue of financing for peacebuilding. Support from Member States is crucial for the Peacebuilding Fund in order to succeed in its goal of contributing to peacebuilding efforts. Sustaining peace is a core business of the United Nations, and more structural and sustainable funding is needed for that. I call on Member States to consider contributing or increasing their contribution to the PBF. Furthermore, we look forward to the Secretary-General proposing bold options in his report to increase and sustain funding for peacebuilding, including within assessed contributions.

Let me conclude by reiterating the strong support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): It is my great pleasure to address the General Assembly at this joint debate. I would like to begin by congratulating Ambassador Cho Tae-yul on assuming the chairmanship of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for 2017. I would also like to thank Ambassador Macharia Kamau for Kenya's leadership over the past year. And I thank all Chairs of the country-specific configurations for their efforts.

The year 2016 was one of review. In April, we saw the simultaneous adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016), on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. The year 2017, in turn, must be a year of implementation during which we translate the review into concrete and practical results. Japan strongly hopes that those resolutions will help the PBC diversify its working methods so as to enhance its efficiency and flexibility, expand the geographical scope of the PBC and employ its particular strength in carrying out its long-term endeavours, which lay the groundwork for sustaining peace. Japan also attaches importance to enhanced coordination and cooperation between the PBC and the Security Council.

One of the key elements of the report (A/71/768) of the PBC on its tenth session, which has just been submitted to the General Assembly, is to expand from a country-specific approach and include a thematic approach by establishing focal points. We hope that that expansive approach will revitalize the PBC and turn it into a more effective body. Japan has been appointed as the focal point for institution-building and will do its best to integrate that theme into the work of the PBC. We would like to align our work with the priorities of the Chair, and we consider it important to review our efforts, including the creation of focal points, at the end of the tenth session in order to continue improving the working methods of the PBC. We look forward to further discussion on how best to make use of focal points in various areas.

Sustaining peace requires not only strong leaders but also solid institutions in areas ranging from security and the rule of law to democracy and governance, as well as the trust of the people in those institutions. A subregional approach is often required for effective measures in areas such as border control. The focal

point for institution-building will respond to the growth of region-wide and cross-border issues that cannot be resolved by individual countries alone. We will provide opportunities to consolidate the necessary expertise and bridge peacebuilding needs with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors. Partnerships with international financial institutions such as the World Bank will enable a renewed focus on financing for peace, as laid out by the Chair.

Last week, Japan convened an interactive workshop to discuss the importance of strengthening the criminal justice system in peacebuilding. We also plan to discuss other important institutional challenges, such as border control and financial structures, later this year. We hope that those discussions will lead to concrete projects and collaboration among beneficiary countries, donors and the relevant international institutions.

Securing adequate resources for peacebuilding is crucial, and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has proved to be an important financial tool for that purpose. In recognition of the Fund's usefulness, as well as the current difficulties it faces, Japan contributed an additional $2.5 million last month. Our total contribution has now reached $48.5 million. Japan echoes the call in last year's resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture for other Member States to consider making voluntary contributions to the Fund.

It is critical that the PBF and PBC work in tandem to bring about maximum results with limited resources. In that regard, Japan supports Ambassador Cho Tae-yul's initiative to enhance collaboration between PBC member States and the Peacebuilding Support Office. Furthermore, widely publicizing the success stories of PBF projects around the world is key for the Fund to attract the necessary resources. In addition, the PBF can explore more innovative approaches, such as collaboration with the private sector.

Let me conclude my statement by reaffirming Japan's strong commitment to building and sustaining peace.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Ambassador Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya, for presenting the report (A/71/768) of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on its tenth session. We commend his efforts as the Chair of the PBC during the past year. China also congratulates Ambassador Cho Tae-yul, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, on his election as Chair of the PBC. We also welcome the report (A/71/792) of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) submitted by Secretary-General Guterres.

Last year, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office, as the main peacebuilding bodies, implemented in earnest the mandates of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, actively coordinated the international community's peacebuilding efforts and carried out much work in general. One year ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted identical resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively, on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, thereby setting a course for the United Nations peacebuilding work for the next five years. I would like to make the following observations with regard to the implementation of those 2016 resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

First, we should adhere to the "country-owned and country-led" principle. The countries concerned have the primary responsibility for peacebuilding. The United Nations and other peacebuilding partners should always uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. At the request of the countries concerned, and with their leadership, the United Nations and peacebuilding partners should help develop targeted peacebuilding programmes according to the real needs, development stages and priorities of those countries, assist them in strengthening capacity-building and continuously consolidating peace.

Secondly, United Nations bodies and peacebuilding partner organizations should work according to their respective mandates. The PBC should effectively play its role as an intergovernmental advisory body. The Security Council should enhance its communication with the PBC and its country-specific configurations and provide better guidance for peacebuilding. The United Nations funds and programmes as well as international financial and development institutions, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, should focus on supporting developing countries, particularly conflict-affected countries, in achieving economic and social development and eliminating the root causes of conflicts like poverty.

Thirdly, regional partners should have a role to play in peacebuilding. Currently, all the countries on the agenda of the PBC are in Africa. The PBC

and its country configurations should step up their communication with African regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union (AU). The United Nations and the international community should support the AU's efforts to implement initiatives such as the African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap 2016–2020 and Agenda 2063, so as to help Africa achieve long-term peace, stability and prosperity.

Fourthly, peacebuilding should be well integrated with conflict prevention. The 2016 resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture give greater attention to conflict prevention. Peacebuilding and conflict prevention both work towards achieving lasting peace and share the same goals. Peacebuilding and conflict-prevention efforts should be aimed at assisting the countries concerned in enhancing their capabilities in areas such as political security, economic development and social integration, so as to establish conditions for lasting peace.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): We commend the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Cho Tae-yul, for his statement and his contribution to the work of the Commission. We also greatly appreciate Ambassador Kamau's work during the past year.

The report (A/71/768) before us provides a useful overview of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) during its tenth session and valuable action-oriented recommendations. Pakistan welcomes the report's focus on three key issues: financing for peacebuilding, the implementation of the recommendations of the peacebuilding review, and the review of the PBC's own working methods.

Since its inception, the Peacebuilding Commission has evolved in line with the changing nature of conflict and the need for the United Nations to develop appropriate and comprehensive approaches for building self-sustaining, durable peace. The review of the peacebuilding architecture led to a growing consensus around the concept of peacebuilding as an enabler of sustainable peace and development in conflict and post-conflict situations.

As a troop-contributing country and a founding member of the PBC, Pakistan has seen peacebuilding activities produce tangible results on the ground. Multidimensional peacekeeping missions, where they are deployed, implement critical peacebuilding tasks as part of their integrated mandates. As early peacebuilders, peacekeepers therefore lay the foundation of durable peace. The bulk of peacekeeping resources today is deployed in multidimensional missions, hence the need to make them even more effective. Improving the lives of ordinary people affected by conflict is a time-tested yardstick that we can, and do, use to evaluate that important work.

With examples like the drawdown of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, we are seeing peacekeeping missions graduate to the peacebuilding phase. The advisory role of the PBC will be of particular importance during those transition phases. Our collective aim should be to prevent a relapse into conflict through capacity-building and the extension of State authority. Yet, when contemplating its role during the transition, the PBC needs to be realistic about what it can offer, since it is not present in the field and does not have an operational mandate. It has to become the medium through which the views and perspectives of all the relevant stakeholders are factored in the Security Council's decisions during such transitions. That would ensure that the transitions are grounded in country-level realities.

We believe that effective long-term peacebuilding processes require, first, early agreement on priorities and alignment of requisite resources; secondly, strengthening national ownership and capacity-development from the outset; and, thirdly, working with Member States, particularly donors, to enhance the speed, flexibility and risk tolerance of funding mechanisms.

Peacebuilding is not only a long-term and complex task, it is also an expensive one. It requires resources, both financial and human. A failure to provide adequate resources at the right time may jeopardize the entire effort. From the report (A/71/792) of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund, it is clear that there is concern about the Fund's financial health, at a time when demand for its assistance is high. It is critical that the Fund continue to search for new and innovative ways to enhance its resources. As it enters the next decade in supporting countries in their efforts to sustain peace, attracting sufficient resources will remain vital. With the anticipated transitions of peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and Liberia, United Nations peacebuilding efforts will require adequate, predictable and sustained financing.

Peacebuilding is hard work, and it cannot happen without local political ownership. It requires

the restoration of trust between citizens and their institutions, and work to transform political processes so that conflict within societies can be managed without violence. Lasting peace cannot be imposed from the outside. It can be built only from within. The role of the Peacebuilding Commission in that endeavour will remain critical.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): I thank the President for convening this joint debate on the work of the tenth session of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). I welcome the report (A/71/768) of the PBC and that of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792). This meeting offers an excellent opportunity to further discuss peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

My statement is fully aligned with the one delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union (EU).

The peacebuilding concept — introduced 25 years ago, in 1992 — has not yet been entirely fulfilled, if it ever will be. The review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture was indeed a decisive marker of progress that led to the adoption, last year, of two identical resolutions by the Assembly and by the Security Council (respectively, resolution 70/262) and resolution 2282 (2016)), which embraced the new concept of sustaining peace, which Portugal fully supports. Building on lessons learned from the past, the scope of peacebuilding has been extended to encompass every stage, from conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction. It reflects a holistic approach that potentiates what we are aiming for: the achievement and maintenance of peace. There is a widespread understanding that for peacebuilding to succeed, all issues related to peace and security, sustainable development and human rights must be addressed in a symbiotic way.

As per the two reports, today only African countries are on the PBC agenda, and most PBF projects are being implemented in African countries. I recall that Africa is home to several regional and subregional organizations that work towards peace and security, including conflict prevention. The African Peace and Security Architecture has also been developed, which is an integrated structure at the continental level endowed with peacebuilding instruments. Portugal encourages the entire United Nations system, particularly the PBC and its convening power, to further explore ways to improve synergies with that African initiative.

In a broader perspective, we believe it is crucial for the United Nations to engage with relevant regional and subregional organizations worldwide in the search for complementarities in efforts and resources. We should not only take advantage of the existing structures, such as those implemented by African Peace and Security Architecture or the trilateral cooperation put in place by the United Nations, the African Union and the EU in Africa, but also enhance the capabilities of regional partners and other relevant mechanisms, many of which include security and early-warning tools.

With regard to the performance of the PBC country-specific configurations over the past year, we commend the efforts of all the configuration Chairs. There is good progress to report, even though many challenges remain to be tackled. We strongly believe that the PBC has a crucial role to play in these countries. As a new member of the Central African Republic PBC country-specific configuration, Portugal is fully committed to actively contributing to the good work of the configuration. Our participation in the configuration is based upon the participation of Portugal in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, through the provision of a rapid-reaction force, which operates without any caveats.

As a fully committed member of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration since its inception, Portugal recognizes its increasing importance. As the country faces an ongoing political and institutional stalemate, the role of the PBC in keeping the issue under international attention, among other merits, became even more significant.

The goals of the activities of the PBC and the PBF are fully aligned with the surge in diplomacy for peace advocated by Secretary-General António Guterres. At the same time, preventing conflicts was placed at the core of the Organization's priorities by the Secretary-General, who is focusing on the peace continuum concept by developing a comprehensive, modern and effective operational peace architecture that encompasses prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development. We fully support the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts in that regard and look forward to the follow-up report to the seventy-second session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the two identical resolutions and the options as to how to tackle the crucial issue of funding

the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in a more predictable and sustained way.

In conclusion, I recall that peacebuilding was initially conceived to address the gap between security and development in fragile, post-conflict countries. A basic assertion in that regard is that peacebuilding should take place at the country level. However, to be truly effective, the United Nations system must work in a more integrated, flexible and coordinated manner, and must definitely prioritize prevention and early-warning tools and signs.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President for convening this very timely joint debate. I wish to also express thanks for the presentation of both reports (A/71/768 and A/71/792).

Colombia, as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, endorses the statement made by Mr. Cho Tae-yul, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. We also endorse the statement of his predecessor Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya. We greatly appreciate his work and tireless efforts to make the work of the Commission more visible, which helps to ensure the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping efforts.

My country welcomes the presentation of both reports and, after a thorough reading, we see encouraging signs of the commitment of Member States to the advancement of the Organization and the mechanisms that allow us to make concrete progress. I would like to highlight three lessons learned, mentioned in the report, that show us the way forward.

The first is good practices on the ground. The reports insist, in one way or another, on the value of individual experiences on the ground — what works and what does not, the uniqueness of each and how better results can be obtained when the conditions specific to each situation are taken into account. Colombia is well aware of this, as our peace negotiations and the agreements resulting therefrom, and the efforts of the parties — the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) — took shape in the form of an innovative tripartite mechanism that responds to the concrete needs of the Colombian reality.

There are no magic formulas applicable to all circumstances, but experience has been gathered through peacekeeping and special political missions and regional bodies. As we have heard repeatedly, experiences such as those of the African Union and the Latin American States are a substantive contributions that cannot be ignored.

The concept of building sustainable peace is of immense relevance to the Colombia of today. Our peace agreement for the termination of the oldest conflict in the American hemisphere — more than five decades long — includes a novel, tripartite and unique mechanism that the report recognizes. We are grateful for that recognition. The special political mission, together with the parties to the process — FARC and the Government — are present, with the United Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The concept of sustaining peace for all, as reflected in the reports presented today, goes much further than traditional concepts of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration — the famous DDR — because it includes the transformation of rural areas and the creation of opportunities in those areas, which were the epicentre of the conflict in our case for over half a century, thereby pointing directly to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and of the three pillars of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

With regard to the issue of sustainable and predictable financing, efforts to achieve sustainable peace in situations where such peace is threatened at the global level cannot be viewed as an expenditure. It is always an investment with an eye to the future of whole generations. The reports show this path in highlighting positive achievements based on approaches that could be qualified as a calculated risk and involve in peacebuilding local actors as well as the Government, and ownership of both the efforts and their results, all of which are crucial to that national activity.

In my country's experience with the special political mission, the vote of confidence for ownership, received through resolutions of the Security Council and other members of the Organization for the disbursement of resources, has always been one of the most important aspects allowing us to move forward in the quest for a stable and sustainable peace on the basis of the implementation of agreements.

The third issue I wish to discuss is cross-cutting gender issues. In my personal capacity and as Chair

of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity, which counts 107 Member States united towards that goal, I could not conclude without referring to the significant achievements of the PBC gender strategy. Thanks to this consensus strategy, last year we managed to integrate a gender dimension into Commission activities through policies designed to increase the involvement and prominence of women in positions of leadership in conflict-prevention and building of long-term peace, a goal that the Secretary-General has set for himself and the missions in the years to come.

For Colombia, in whose peace agreement victims, usually women, are at the centre, victims' participation as negotiators in the formulation and shaping of gender perspectives in the agreements reached shows the good results that are possible when the most vulnerable, namely, women, are actively incorporated in sustaining peace, the complicated efforts of which take whole generations to achieve.

As I began by saying, peace cannot be viewed as an expense. Instead, it should be seen as an investment. Let me say that peace will always be an investment that we must bet on, including in these dark times of humanitarian crises and international geopolitical tensions. In those times of darkness, the light emerges.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the President for convening today's debate. We express our gratitude to the current and previous Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Cho Tae-yul and Ambassador Macharia Kamau, for their informative briefings and energetic efforts at the helm of the Commission.

United Nations peacebuilding support is an important tool to help States overcome the impact of conflict and prevent its recurrence. In that context, the Peacebuilding Commission plays an important role, as it is at the same time an intergovernmental consultative body on peacebuilding issues as well as a platform where its members can hear views from a broad range of invited participants regarding the issues on its agenda.

Last year was marked by a key event in the area of peacebuilding, namely, the adoption of identical resolutions by the Assembly and the Security Council on the peacebuilding architecture review (respectively, resolution 70/262 and resolution 2282 (2016)). We believe that the concrete long-term goals and objectives for peacebuilding and sustaining peace set out by the resolutions will make a positive contribution to efforts to provide peacebuilding support to countries that require such support.

The resolutions also brought the term "sustaining peace" into broader use. That term is inextricably linked to the goals and objectives of peacebuilding. It refers to the need to achieve lasting peace by eradicating the root causes of conflict through national reconciliation and, ultimately, through recovery, reconstruction and development. In working towards implementing these objectives, it is important to be fully aware that the responsibility for peace lies with all national stakeholders, the Government, society and the private sector. Only a comprehensive, unbiased approach to providing international assistance that takes into account country-specific contexts will contribute effectively in that area.

At the same time, the principle of national ownership should invariably remain at the heart of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. National ownership means that Governments, taking into account the needs of their people, find priorities and strategies for peacebuilding. It also means that the role of the United Nations and other international stakeholders in this process is that of providing support to countries, with their consent, when needed. Such support should be based on helping affected countries build capacity to overcome and prevent a recurrence of conflict.

It is important to be aware of, and never cross, the line where assistance ceases to be a stimulating factor and becomes imposed, essentially becoming interference in the internal affairs of States. That is unacceptable. Indeed, it is external interference in State affairs, including the replacement of legitimate regimes, that has caused numerous destructive conflicts. We emphasize that no peacebuilding efforts or innovative concepts will be useful as long as there is temptation to exert pressure and affect the internal processes in a sovereign country to serve the political aims of certain actors.

Last year was a very active one for the Commission and for the Peacebuilding Fund. They have once again shown the important role that they play in advancing and implementing peacebuilding objectives. That is also evidenced by the overall improvement of Fund programme results, as well as increased effectiveness in the implementation of its core projects. That was noted in the report (A/71/792) of the Secretary-General. It was also important that most of the projects sought to

support national reconciliation, prevention and conflict resolution, and stimulate political dialogue.

We believe it is important to strengthen the interaction between the Commission and the Fund. The latter could benefit from the Commission's vast experience as well as its contacts with partners who provide financial, technical and advisory support for post-conflict States. The Fund, in turn, has shown itself to be an excellent mechanism for financing peacebuilding efforts in affected countries, and one that helps to achieve recovery and development in these countries. We believe that last year's review by the Commission of the results of the Fund's work in Kyrgyzstan is a positive example of such interaction, with the consent and participation of the host State.

We believe it is important to further strengthen the cooperation of the Commission and the Fund with regional and subregional bodies, for example the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. In order to effectively overcome crises on the African continent, we need an approach that is based on the leadership role of Africans themselves. They should be the ones to define how to settle whatever disputes may exist, and then receive effective support from the international community.

It is also important to increase the consultative role that the PBC plays. An important step in that area could be the sharing views of host countries on their peacebuilding priorities, as well as concerns. Such interaction is especially relevant at the stage when mandates are handed over from peacekeeping operations to country teams, and when United Nations peacekeeping missions are drawing down.

In terms of the importance of financing peacebuilding projects, we believe that this is directly affected by transparency and accountability in the use of funds. We trust that the Secretary-General, in his upcoming report, will present Member States with detailed and realistic options. In our view, those options can include enhancing the Fund tool kit, as well as increasing its attractiveness to potential donors.

Ms. Amadeo (United States of America): We congratulate the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Cho Tae-yul, for his ongoing chairmanship of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). We believe the PBC's year is already off to a strong start under his leadership. Let me also thank the Permanent Representative of Kenya, Ambassador Kamau, for his excellent stewardship of the Commission last year.

Just a year ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted resolutions (respectively, resolution 70/262 and resolution 2282 (2016)) that introduced the concept of sustaining peace, which included a comprehensive definition of peacebuilding that goes beyond the post-conflict period and applies to all phases of conflict: before, during and after. That means that all pillars of the United Nations should be engaged in sustaining peace, including by doing more to prevent the outbreak and address the root causes of violent conflict.

The PBC has an important role in ensuring that the entire United Nations system recognizes how inextricably linked sustainable development and sustainable peace are. We have had some success. Since last April, the importance of sustaining peace and the call to link efforts to promote peace, security, development and human rights, have been reiterated time and again — most notably during the joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the PBC last June, and during the recent high-level dialogue on building sustainable peace for all.

The General Assembly recognized the positive role that sustainable development plays in mitigating drivers of conflict and the importance of a whole-of-system response to sustaining peace when we adopted the outcome of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review in December. The Peacebuilding Commission has begun to bring that whole-of-system approach to its country-specific configurations. Take Sierra Leone, which was one of the first countries on the Commission's agenda. Sierra Leone will hold its presidential and parliamentary elections next year, and the PBC, through the leadership of Canada, is committed to helping the Government of Sierra Leone conduct peaceful, free and fair elections.

The PBC's engagement in Liberia is another bright example of the contributions that the Commission, the Fund and the Peacebuilding Support Office can make, especially when they work together with the Security Council. In December, the Security Council requested that the Secretary-General produce a peacebuilding plan to support Liberia's transition. Drafting that plan brought together the Government of Liberia, the United Nations, donors and civil society for a series of fruitful exercises that not only generated a peacebuilding plan

that was presented to the Security Council last month, but also set a precedent for similar peacebuilding work in other countries.

Let me also recognize the outstanding work of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) over the past year. We are impressed by the PBF's innovative engagement with civil society organizations to promote gender and youth initiatives, as well as by its partnership with the World Bank in the peacebuilding processes in Yemen and the Central African Republic. In its cross-border efforts along the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border and the Chad-Cameroon border, the PBF recognized an important gap in assistance, and we applaud its efforts to address them so that no one is left behind.

The United States is pleased to see that the PBF exceeded the United-Nations-wide commitment to allocate at least 15 per cent of resources to women's empowerment. With that achievement, the PBF has set an excellent example. We encourage the rest of the system to follow suit. Recognizing these successes, we can do more. In a time of greater need and limited resources, we must work together to energize the United Nations peacebuilding work. The PBC should be the linchpin that brings together United Nations bodies, Governments and other stakeholders to ensure that we are all working in a coherent and coordinated manner to build sustainable peace. In addition, we believe that the Peacebuilding Support Office, together with the Commission, can add value by articulating the underlying vision that ties together the activities on focal points. Overall, our goal is a comprehensive vision of peacebuilding, which will help the United Nations itself to integrate its work.

The PBC is well positioned to do this, and the renewed commitment by its members to engage comprehensively on peacebuilding, not just through country-specific lenses, is a step in the right direction. The PBC in particular can use Commission meetings to invite United Nations actors to brief on peacebuilding efforts, and invite representatives from the international financial institutions, civil society and other stakeholders to take part.

We have made a good start. Outside of its country-specific configurations, the PBC has convened sessions that highlighted its value-added role in supporting United Nations agencies, Member States and international organizations. A few weeks ago, the PBC arranged a review of regional peacebuilding in the Sahel, and just yesterday hosted an informative discussion on peacebuilding in the Gambia. These define a new way of working that calls attention to the need to support countries post-conflict, stabilization, security and sustainable growth. The PBC promoted coordination between United Nations agencies, donors and the international community, and spread awareness and information about best practices. That shift is timely as we all put our heads together to determine the best way to support the Secretary-General's reform agenda. We would like to see more of this.

This may sound obvious, but we are talking about nothing less than overhauling the way the United Nations has been organized for decades. Last year, when Member States unanimously supported the sustaining peace agenda, they endorsed a new way of doing business: that to build peace, we need to break down the barriers that exist in the United Nations so that staff focused on political, security, humanitarian and development challenges all work together. To do that, we hope that the Secretary-General's review of the United Nations peace and security work will take a fresh look at the United Nations peacebuilding architecture to ensure it is as effective as possible and integrated across the United Nations development and security toolkit.

We look forward to today's debate and to continued work with all present, as well as Secretary-General Guterres, Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed and Assistant Secretary-General Fernandez-Taranco, to promote sustainable peace for all.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.78

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

78th plenary meeting
Thursday, 20 April 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Eleyatt (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 29, 61 and 110 (*continued*)

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768)

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792)

Ms. Lind (Estonia): I thank you, Sir, for convening a meeting on the reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (A/71/768) and on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792). This debate provides an opportunity to reflect on peacebuilding activities this past year and for the future.

Estonia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/71/PV.77).

Almost a year ago, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively, on the review of the peacebuilding architecture. That was a landmark achievement, as the concept of sustaining peace was introduced in recognition of the comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing peacebuilding, going beyond the post-conflict phase and including all stages of a conflict. As recent reviews of the United Nations peace-related activities had concluded, there was an urgent need to put prevention at the core of the United Nation's work. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's vision on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as outlined at the beginning of the year.

If peacebuilding and sustaining peace are to be effective, it is essential to integrate peace and security, human rights and development approaches. None of the three United Nations mandates could be achieved without the others. It is therefore important to invest in democracy, good governance and the rule of law, as political exclusion is among the most common causes of violent conflict. Equally, the protection of human rights and respect for fundamental freedoms are core principles for sustaining peace and achieving equal, equitable and progressive societies.

The resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture restated important mandates for the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) concerning countries in the transition period. We welcome the comprehensive report of the Peacebuilding Commission's tenth session as the first summary of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the resolutions. We would like to commend the Permanent Representative of Kenya for his leadership and work as the Chair of the Commission last year.

Estonia became a member of the Peacebuilding Commission this year. We would like to express our full support to the current Chair of Commission, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, in his efforts to re-energize the Commission's work. Estonia supports a broader focus for the Peacebuilding Commission, including through regional approaches

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and addressing cross-cutting issues, strengthening the bridging role between the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, and improving the PBC's advisory role to those organs. We are convinced that for effective peacebuilding, the United Nations system needs to work in a more integrated, flexible and coordinated manner, both at the country level and at the Headquarters. We therefore support efforts to link the reform of the peace and security architecture of the United Nations with the reform of the United Nations development system, which would contribute to the one United Nations initiative.

Furthermore, the gender aspect and the empowerment of women is critical for sustaining peace. We welcome last year's adoption of the PBC's gender strategy. The engagement of women from the early stages of prevention, resolving crises, peacebuilding and securing peace reduces the probability of relapsing into violent conflict and leads to more durable peace agreements.

Additionally, predictable financing is an essential component of peacebuilding activities. Estonia contributes to the Peacebuilding Fund, and we are glad that the Fund has shown substantial results. Greater cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund is needed.

Last but not least, close partnerships between the United Nations and international, regional and subregional organizations, as well as international financial institutions, are essential to addressing the challenge of sustaining peace. We especially encourage reinforcing its collaboration with the World Bank and the African Union.

Estonia looks forward to continuing to work in the Peacebuilding Commission, and we would also like to thank the Peacebuilding Support Office for its outstanding work.

Ms. Bird (Australia): Australia is deeply committed to the implementation of the sustaining peace agenda. The sustaining peace resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)), facilitated by Australia and Angola, set out ambitious objectives to deliver on the international community's commitment to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Those objectives go to the core of the Charter of the United Nations.

We commend both the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund for the results achieved over the past year, in two areas in particular.

First of all, we acknowledge the longer-term strategic advice provided by the Peacebuilding Commission to the Security Council on countries in transition, such as Liberia. The sustaining peace resolutions, coupled with the Secretary-General's commitment to sustaining peace, provide an opportunity for the Commission to reinvigorate its important advisory role, which it must seize. The Commission's contribution to Liberia's peacebuilding plan has been recognized by the Secretary-General as a model for inclusive consultations and longer-term strategic planning. Those efforts are practical ways to advance the sustaining peace agenda.

Secondly, we congratulate both the Peacebuilding Fund and the Peacebuilding Commission on their respective initiatives to promote gender equality. The Fund's achievement of surpassing the 15 per cent target for gender-sensitive peacebuilding in 2016 is the culmination of years of dedicated work by the Peacebuilding Support Office. It will help ensure that women's needs and priorities are addressed in conflict-affected countries. We urge the Peacebuilding Fund to surpass that target again in 2017 and to improve the monitoring of gender-sensitive investments in peacebuilding. Equally, we commend the Peacebuilding Commission for the adoption of a gender strategy — a major achievement for an intergovernmental United Nations body. We look forward to the Commission implementing that strategy.

Australia's $10 million commitment to the Peacebuilding Fund shows our confidence in the Fund's work. We urge all members to make strong financial commitments to meeting the $150 million shortfall identified by the Fund in its latest report. We also encourage continued efforts to improve cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, in particular on financing options. In that respect, we welcome both the Commission's and the Fund's actions to strengthen cooperation with the World Bank.

We recognize that much work lies ahead in order to prioritize conflict prevention in practice and strengthen predictable financing for peacebuilding. We urge United Nations Members and the United Nations system to embrace those challenges, so as to ensure that we continue to make progress in implementing and embedding the sustaining peace approach.

Ms. Stener (Norway): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting, and for providing an opportunity to comment on the Peacebuilding Commission's report on its tenth session (A/71/768), and the Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792).

First, allow me to say that Norway is very pleased to be back in the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Long-term and comprehensive peacebuilding has always been a central part of Norwegian foreign policy. We welcome the focus of the PBC report — a more flexible Commission. In the light of the sustaining peace resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) and the Secretary-General's clear leadership and prioritization of conflict prevention, the Peacebuilding Commission has an obvious role to play. The Commission should take advantage of that momentum and build on its experience as a convening power.

The experience of country configurations is important, and we see clear signs of the comparative advantage of the PBC in Liberia, for example. However, it is important for the Commission to increase its flexibility with regard to country situations. We would like to commend the chairmanship of the PBC for its ability to cooperate closely with the Security Council and the Secretariat, while simultaneously showing the relevance of the Commission for conflicts that are not formally on the its agenda.

The PBC report proposes to establish focal points for certain central issues in the sustaining peace agenda. Norway is honoured to have been entrusted with the role of focal point of financing for peacebuilding — alongside our good partner, Indonesia. We intend to work closely with the chairmanship and other Member States. We will draw on the important discussions and experiences on financing shared in the Secretariat with the participation of civil society and other actors, in order to prepare for the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on sustaining peace.

As stated in the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (A/69/968), peacebuilding for too long has been left as an afterthought: underprioritized and underresourced. Addressing the root causes of conflict requires long-term commitment and access to regular, predictable and adequate funding. That responsibility rests heavily on us, the States Members of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General's report on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) shows us once again that the Fund is a crucial player for United Nations peacebuilding. The Fund has a strong record of delivering on its relatively narrow objectives and should be recognized as addressing the market failure in financing for peacebuilding with a flexible, risk-taking approach. The PBF also contributes directly to Sustainable Development Goal 16 on just, peaceful and inclusive societies — as confirmed by a number of independent evaluations. Norway will continue to be a strong supporter of the PBF. We encourage all Member States to look into possibilities for supporting the Fund, given its harsh financial reality.

Last, but not least, Norway particularly commends the Fund for its immense efforts in promoting and funding the role of women in peacebuilding. The Peacebuilding Commission's recently adopted gender strategy contributes to important synergies with the Fund in that regard. Women constitute half of the population. If we do not involve women, we risk missing half the conflict analysis; we might overlook half of the problems and miss half of the potential solutions. The fact that the Fund is the first of the United Nations agencies to have reached the aim of 15 per cent support to women's empowerment — and has now even surpassed 20 per cent, is highly impressive and should be an encouragement for the rest of the United Nations family.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): Bangladesh joins other delegations in thanking you, Sir, for having convened this joint debate on the annual reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (A/71/768) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/71/792). We commend the stellar role played by the PBC Chairs in 2016 and 2017 in advancing the Commission's work — pursuant to last year's substantively identical resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture review (resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively).

Bangladesh feels encouraged by the Secretary-General's commitment to sustaining peace, which has been the PBC's unique contribution to the entire United Nations system. Through their consideration of the goal and process of sustaining peace, the aforementioned resolutions appropriately broaden the traditional notion of peacebuilding and underscore the importance of sustained political accompaniment through the entire spectrum of conflicts, with a focus

on conflict prevention. We urge all principal organs of the United Nations and all other relevant stakeholders to duly acknowledge this new approach and to give peacebuilding a real chance to deliver on its potential in national, regional and multilateral contexts.

While echoing the points made by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the PBC in their introductory statements, we wish to reiterate the importance we attach to five critical issues.

First of all, the centrality of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding and sustaining peace must be valued and preserved in real terms. It is of paramount importance to foster an environment of inclusive peacebuilding where a diverse set of national actors with legitimate voices and interests have the opportunity to participate and contribute. We appreciate the inclusive and consultative process of developing the statements of mutual commitment to peacebuilding by certain country-specific configurations. We also laud the recent proactive initiatives by the delegations of Kyrgyzstan and the Gambia to have their national peacebuilding priorities and initiatives deliberated in the PBC through multi-stakeholder engagements.

Secondly, it is encouraging to see positive ongoing efforts, including at the field level, to break down silos within the United Nations with a view to advancing the comprehensive goal and process of sustaining peace. It must remain a constant preoccupation for the PBC, through its convening and advisory roles, to further consolidate these efforts, particularly towards bringing the security, development and humanitarian actors closer to each other without undercutting their respective mandates and competence.

We reiterate our thanks to President Thomson and the PBC Chairs for having convened the High-level Dialogue earlier this year to discuss the potential synergies between the notion of sustaining peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We recognize that much work remains to be done in that context and are committed to doing our part in our capacity as coordinator of the group of least developed countries at the United Nations.

Thirdly, we welcome the upswing in the PBC's interface with the relevant regional and subregional organizations, especially in Africa, and its growing focus on regional, cross-cutting issues. The PBC's value-added work could make a difference by addressing various relevant and emerging issues of concern, including the critical task of institution building. In that context, we underline the importance of building on the recent constructive and forward-looking deliberations of the PBC regarding the Sahel and Lake Chad regions. The Commission's partnerships with the concerned regional and subregional organizations have emerged as a unique resource that must be fully leveraged.

Fourthly, we consider the adoption of the PBC gender strategy last year to be a valuable contribution to the promotion of the inclusivity agenda for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. We thank the PBC membership for entrusting Bangladesh and Canada with the responsibility to serve as focal points for the first year of the strategy's implementation. We look forward to the cooperation of all concerned in allowing the gender dimension be mainstreamed through the work of all relevant PBC activities, and in highlighting the strategy in relevant entities and forums across the United Nations system. We are confident that the PBC gender strategy has the potential to advance the women and peace and security agenda in practical terms, including by complementing national action plans pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), where relevant. Bangladesh also welcomes the PBC's focus on promoting the role of youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Fifthly, and perhaps most importantly, the lack of financing for peacebuilding remains an obstacle to realizing the comprehensive goal and process of sustaining peace. Last year's twin resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) underscored the need for increased, predictable and sustainable financing. We hope that they will help garner the necessary political support for mobilizing critical resources for peacebuilding, including for the PBF. The rapid and flexible funding mechanism offered by the PBF is widely recognized, yet it is underfunded. That gap needs to be addressed.

In that connection, we look forward to both pragmatic and creative ideas from the Secretary-General on mobilizing additional finances for peacebuilding and sustaining peace through both assessed and voluntary contributions. We hope this year's annual PBC session will help generate some constructive suggestions to that end and will enhance the synergy between the work of PBC and PBF.

Bangladesh underscores the importance of making the best use of the PBC's convening and advisory role to broaden its dialogue and engagement with international financial institutions and other development partners in order to increase coordination and coherence in peacebuilding activities. We urge PBC to impress upon the relevant international financial institutions the importance of staying engaged with the concerned countries, on favourable terms, in order for them to pursue their socioeconomic development efforts as critical enablers of national recovery and reconciliation.

Bangladesh remains attached to the "one PBC" idea and supports the review of the PBC's working methods to further that objective. On our part, we shall continue to discharge our role — as a PBC member and as the coordinator of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries Caucus in the PBC — in support of implementing last year's twin resolutions and making peacebuilding and sustaining peace a flagship agenda of the United Nations.

In line with our abiding commitment to peacebuilding, our Government is poised to open the doors of a peacebuilding centre in our capital, which we believe would add to regional and international efforts in peacebuilding and sustaining peace through substantive research and training activities. We invite all interested partners, including the Peacebuilding Support Office, to come forward in forging meaningful and value-added partnerships to make the best use of that centre.

Mr. Wheeler (United Kingdom): One year after Member States agreed to the twin sustaining peace resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)), we have seen progress in how both the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) can assist in their implementation, and signs as to the direction they should move in. Much of the Commission's added value within the United Nations is in helping sustain peace in countries transitioning out of conflict and, as is often the case, off the Security Council's agenda. There are three ways it can do that, in practice.

First, the Commission should, on a frequent basis, be asking how all United Nations actors are helping address conflict drivers in a coherent way, especially in the countries on its agenda. There is no other part of the United Nations where those questions can be asked by Member States. Only yesterday, at the request of the Gambia, several United Nations actors briefed the Commission on their support of that country. We hope to see such dialogue continue.

Secondly, the Commission should work harder to provide space for United Nations and non-United Nations actors, including regional organizations, international financial institutions and civil society to engage with one another on how they can each play to their comparative advantage. We should not pretend that the United Nations can do everything, but it can help ensure that the wider international community gets everything done. We recently saw the Commission play that role in discussions on the Sahel and have been impressed at how it has helped bring stakeholders around a peacebuilding plan in Liberia.

Thirdly, while significant progress has been made in recent years, the Commission still needs to become more flexible and able to tailor its response according to need. Every conflict is different.

The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of the Peacebuilding Fund, which is why we will dedicate over $10 million a year to the Fund, until 2020. The PBF provides funding that is fast, flexible and risk-tolerant — all critical attributes for assisting conflict-affected States. It has also exceeded its commitment of allocating 15 per cent of its resources to women's empowerment, essential to any effort to sustain peace, and its work in Yemen demonstrates the role it can play in crises.

The United Kingdom welcomes the cases of Somalia, Colombia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, for example, where the PBF has successfully allocated a relatively small amount of money in order to leverage much greater funding from bigger donors. That is a good example of how the United Nations can play to its comparative advantage in sustaining peace, as an enabler rather than a financer. Indeed, we must reject the idea that if the United Nations simply spent more money on peace, then more countries would be peaceful. Other factors, often related to power and exclusion within States and societies, matter much more. However, when and where the conditions are right, external financing can make a real difference. It is clear that the Peacebuilding Fund has played such a role, and we would urge it to do more to highlight the successes, its comparative advantage and its strategic position in sustaining peace.

The United Kingdom looks forward to seeing continued progress in both the Peacebuilding

Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in the year ahead.

Mrs. Puerschel (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

Allow me to add just three brief points from the German perspective.

First, we believe the sustaining peace resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) were milestones in putting prevention first. We also laud the Secretary-General for making prevention his top priority. We wish to support him in his efforts, primarily by helping restructure the Secretariat to make it fit for purpose in terms of conflict prevention. The reports in front of us show us how a little money up front can prevent costly conflicts later on.

Secondly, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund play a vital role in all phases of a conflict, but especially during the crucial transition phases when a peace operation comes to an end and country teams need all the support they can get. We need to emphasize and institutionalize this work.

Thirdly, to complement our support of the Peacebuilding Commission, Germany is promoting stabilization efforts in fragile States. We believe the best way to support political processes is by taking a comprehensive approach. As an example, Germany has enhanced its civil stabilization measures in Mali alongside its military and police engagement. And in addition to the €5 million we have contributed to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, we have also increased our support to the Ministry of Reconciliation and its High Representative to more than €9 million.

Beyond our bilateral engagement, Germany has made significant contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund, having given $22 million in 2016. Germany stands ready to support the Fund and its valuable work in the future.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Indonesia thanks the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for their hard work and efforts in stewarding the Commission.

We also welcome many of the points that the Secretary-General alludes to in his report (A/71/792). The year 2017 marks a renewed approach to peace and security with the introduction of the concept of sustaining peace. In this regard, United Nations peacebuilding as one of the important elements in sustaining peace will remain vital, while the PBC as the entrusted forum, must ensure that peacebuilding in all its aspects corresponds to today's needs and reality. In this context, my delegation would like to share some of its additional thoughts.

The first important element is partnership. No one organ or entity by itself can promote peacebuilding, sustaining peace or the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Strong partners, companions and allies of peace and development, both inside and outside the United Nations, are needed. We need concerted efforts that involve the whole of the United Nations system and include collaboration with national Governments and other key partners, such as international, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil-society organizations, women's groups, youth organizations and the private sector. New information technology and social media should also be utilized as an intangible partner to cultivate support for and more active participation in sustaining peace.

The second is institutionalization. Indonesia supports the recommendation of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations that the Secretary-General be required to develop options for restructuring the Secretariat's peace and security architecture to strengthen leadership and management and to remove the silo mindset. Synergy among all United Nations organs and agencies working in peace and security, development and human rights should be a prerequisite. As Indonesia has urged in other United Nations forums, there needs to be greater collaboration and cooperation between the Security Council, the General Assembly and its main committees, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat agencies and departments. Indonesia welcomes the idea of one PBC to ensure better flexibility and mobilization of the Commission in fulfilling its mandates and functions.

The third is reliable resources. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace should be reinforced through more reliable and predictable resourcing. Indonesia commends the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) for its work. The Fund's impact has been important in attracting support from other actors as well. Indonesia, for its part, has contributed to and will further play its role

to support the PBF. At the same time, we underline the need for a new approach that, in addition to aid and grants, also facilitates domestic and international investments and trade, as well as other innovative sources of financing. Apart from assisting the countries with their national skills and capacity development, our overarching aim should be to make their tools of financing for peacebuilding self-sustainable.

We are happy to note that the annual session of the PBC, to be held on 22 June, will focus on financing for peace. This will be a timely opportunity to discuss innovative ways to provide more predictable support to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Indonesia and Norway are co-focal points of financing for peacebuilding in the PBC and are committed to supporting the PBC in ensuring that the PBC further incorporates financing as one of its key focus areas.

The fourth is a nationally driven process. We reiterate that a nationally owned and sustained process is essential to laying down strong foundations for sustaining peace. This process should encourage women and youth to also play an active role in fostering reconciliation and building stakes for a collective national vision of peace and development. It is vital that the United Nations entities and other partners support in particular the Member States lacking capacities in also integrating conflict prevention and peacebuilding into their national governance and development functions.

We also underline the importance of good leadership and politics. A credible and sustained political process that can tackle conflict's root causes is necessary to mitigate mutual suspicions and build confidence. In their absence, international efforts will have a limited impact.

In conclusion, in the light of today's discussion, my delegation is of the view that the PBC annual session should be reinvigorated as an international forum that enables cross-sectorial stakeholders to synergize and develop concrete initiatives on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Such a forum will help move everyone from rhetoric to practice. It will also help the countries to prioritize political and financial resources for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in a proactive manner.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal welcomes this first annual debate on the report of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (A/71/768), which commemorates the first anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly and the Security Council of the identical resolutions 70/262 and resolution 2282 (2016), on the review of the peacebuilding system.

Allow me to thank and congratulate the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Cho Tae-yul, and his predecessors, Ambassador Macharia Kamau and Ambassador Olof Skoog, for their outstanding work in recent years, which made it possible to strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission, as a central body in the United Nations peace and security framework.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the significant progress made in such a short time in implementing the recommendations of the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (see A/69/968) and subsequent resolutions. By building on those substantial achievements, we must now work with resolve to push for new momentum and even think outside the box with regard to carrying out our work as called for by the identical Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, which act as a guide leading towards more coordinated, comprehensive and coherent strategies so as to lay the foundations for a lasting peace. In the light of the information contained in the report under consideration, we are pleased to note that the Commission has embraced this new vision. Moreover, that shines through not only in its work concerning the countries on its agenda, but also in its initiatives involving regional and cross-cutting issues.

We welcome initiatives to encourage strengthening partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union. In that regard, greater interaction between the Peacebuilding Commission and the relevant bodies of the African Union would facilitate better coordination in their work and consequently lead to streamlining on the ground. A joint assessment of the nature and challenges of peacebuilding in Africa, as well as an ongoing dialogue on how best to coordinate support for countries on the peacebuilding agenda could therefore make that cooperation more constructive.

In that vein, the visit by the Chair of the Commission and chairs of the relevant country configurations to the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa from 17 to 19 October 2016 to consider ways to improve cooperation between the PBC and the African Union Peace and Security Council in the areas of conflict prevention

and sustaining peace in Africa is an initiative that is to be commended and continued. The same applies to discussions dedicated to the regional, transboundary and transnational problems posed by peacekeeping in West Africa, as well as to strengthening partnerships with subregional organizations, in particular the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Mano River Union so as to sustain peace in Africa.

Through their active involvement in mediation and conflict prevention, the African Union and other subregional organizations in Africa have contributed to defusing several crises in the continent at an early stage. Better yet, with the establishment of its peace and security architecture, the African Union has clearly shown its ambition to play a more active role in conflict prevention that — need we recall — is a determinant factor for sustaining peace. In that regard, it should be noted that lessons learned from peacebuilding in Africa reveal the crucial role of regional and subregional partners in supporting political processes. The example of ECOWAS involvement, in particular in Guinea-Bissau and several other countries in the subregion of West Africa, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and other regional and international partners, adequately illustrates the importance of such joint action.

Another important issue that should be considered in the framework of strengthening cooperation with the African Union and subregional organizations is the coordination of the involvement of the various concerned stakeholders in the process of building and sustaining peace in Africa. In that regard, in the framework of their respective chairmanships of the Security Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations and Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, Senegal and Ethiopia took the initiative to organize a joint meeting on the theme of developing synergies for building and sustaining peace in Africa and of how the United Nations, the African Union and its regional mechanisms can strengthen their strategic partnership, to take place on Wednesday 26 April.

Countries that are in the process of peacebuilding are generally politically fragile. Their institutions are often weak, their economies vulnerable and their young people faced with unemployment, while their infrastructure is frequently in need of rebuilding. The challenges that they face in the peacebuilding process are colossal. In terms of assistance, their needs are equally important, including the electoral process; reform of the justice and security sectors; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; strengthening the health and education systems; reviving economic activity; agricultural support; and generating jobs.

In other words, those countries require substantial, long-term funding. Unfortunately, at the same time, the financial resources for sustaining peace remain limited, inconsistent and even unpredictable. As we all know, if peace is to be sustainable, restoring security must be accompanied by economic and social development. That is why we should insist on the importance of maintaining and strengthening support for countries in transition towards peace so that they can continue to benefit from the international community's attention, particularly in terms of sustainable and predictable funding. Taking into account the central role of predictable and sufficient funding in achieving peacebuilding goals, we hope that that issue will continue to receive all the attention that it deserves in our initiatives.

Mr. Mawe (Ireland): I thank the President for convening today's meeting. I also thank Ambassador Kamau of Kenya for his work as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) throughout the reporting period. On behalf of Ireland, I offer Ambassador Cho Tae-yul our full support and every good wish as he takes up that important position for 2017.

Ireland aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union, and I offer the following remarks in my national capacity.

We have reviewed the report of the PBC on its tenth session (A/71/768) and the report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/71/792) with great interest. The reports reflect the ongoing evolution of both mechanisms, particularly in response to the adoption of the sustaining peace resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) this time last year. In particular, we welcome the efforts of the PBC and the PBF in strengthening existing partnerships while also establishing new ones.

Last year, we saw great strides taken by the Commission in developing the relationship between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of sustaining peace. Moreover, in contexts such as those of the Central African Republic and Yemen, cooperation

between the PBF and the World Bank showed the Fund's potential to work hand in hand with external partners on strengthening peacebuilding support for nations. While partnerships with external entities are crucial, it must be recalled that the sustaining peace resolutions place emphasis on the convening power of both the PBC and PBF among internal United Nations bodies and mechanisms. I am pleased to see that reflected in the work of both the Commission and the Fund in 2016 and hope that it will remain a priority throughout the current year.

As mentioned by other delegations today, 2016 was a good year for gender in United Nations peacebuilding activities. One year after becoming the first fund to meet the 15 per cent target of the Secretary-General for gender-responsive peacebuilding, the PBF has now gone further and has exceeded that the target. Moreover, the PBC adopted an advisory gender strategy that will help guide its work. We encourage the sharing of lessons learned among Member States, other United Nations funds and bodies, and external stakeholders as efforts on this area continue. That could include an analysis of the gender dimensions of the 23 PBF final evaluations undertaken last year. We also look forward to continued emphasis on inclusion from both bodies throughout 2017, particularly in the area of civil society and youth.

Development is mentioned no fewer than 19 times in the sustaining peace resolutions, as evidence of its centrality to what we are striving to achieve. Ireland was glad to participate in last summer's joint event between the Economic and Social Council and the PBC, which focused on the nexus between sustaining peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also welcomed the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to convene a high-level event on this issue last January. As we now move into the second year of the implementation of the sustaining peace resolutions, and as we are approaching the third anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, questions remain as to how we can achieve the right level of alignment and complementarity. We believe that the PBC should use its unique position to foster discussion among a wide range of partners to further explore these questions and optimize the potential for complementarity between sustainable development and sustaining peace.

Finally, we want to welcome the continued emphasis on national ownership seen throughout the work of both the PBC and PBF. From our role on the Commission's Liberia configuration, we have seen how the PBC has supported the Liberian Government to act as the main driving force behind its own national peacebuilding planning process. Similarly, the PBF moved quickly to channel support to the implementation of the Colombian peace agreement upon the joint launch by that Government and the United Nations of the new trust fund.

Before last April, peacebuilding was often seen as an area confined to post-conflict contexts. Sustaining peace, however, acts as a thread that connects our traditional concept of peacebuilding to all other areas of support and activity along the peace continuum, in particular conflict prevention. The reports being discussed today show how much has already been done by the PBF and PBC to translate sustaining peace from a concept in a resolution to a practice on the ground. We look forward to supporting these efforts as they are continued and scaled up throughout the current year and beyond.

Ms. Schoulgin Nyoni (Sweden): In exactly one week, we will celebrate the first anniversary of the adoption of the landmark sustaining peace resolutions (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)). At the time of their adoption, Sweden hailed them for being the most comprehensive resolutions to date on peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the United Nations. They not only advance the normative agenda, but also constitute a road map for the United Nations system.

In January, during our presidency of the Security Council, we sought to provide support and momentum to this agenda by holding a ministerial-level open debate (see S/PV.7857) on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. That meeting offered an opportunity for the Secretary-General to lay out his vision for prevention. The level of engagement by Member States underlined the remarkable support for a more proactive United Nations fit to respond to the prevention challenges facing the Organization today. We are encouraged to see that the Secretary-General has put the sustaining peace agenda at the heart of his prevention efforts. We welcome the tangible changes he has already made in his Office, which aim to bring the system together in support of joint analysis as the basis for coherent action by all organs of the United Nations.

A year after the adoption of the sustaining peace resolutions, we must now start to see the agenda in action at all levels. There are several key reforms

currently under way, including the internal review of the Secretariat's peace and security architecture. We have high hopes that those reviews will serve as mechanisms to translate this agenda into concrete and tangible change in operations. There is need for a United Nations system that acts decisively across silos; that recognizes the primacy of politics; that works with national Governments to support the institutions, norms and attitudes that sustain peace; and that leaves no one behind. We will continue to do our part, as we know that a more integrated system often starts with us, the Member States, including with how we finance the system.

I now turn to the two specific reports at hand — that of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at its tenth session (A/71/768) and that of the Peacebuilding Fund (A/71/792). This annual debate in the General Assembly offers us an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved, as well as to determine where we need to go.

With regard to the Peacebuilding Commission, I must first of all thank the Kenyan chairmanship and Ambassador Kamau in particular for his great stewardship of the PBC during 2016, which was a critical year for the Commission. Sweden thoroughly enjoyed working with Kenya as Vice-Chair. In particular, I would like to draw attention to the important steps taken last year to solidify the partnership between the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and the African Union.

Let me also once again welcome the Republic of Korea and Ambassador Cho Tae-yul, as Chair of the PBC, whose proactive and strategic leadership in the first few months is already showing results, which is encouraging for the eleventh session. Yesterday's meeting on the situation in the Gambia is a case in point — that is exactly the kind of role the PBC should be playing. We encourage the PBC to take further steps to diversify its agenda in this vein. From our experience, including having previously chaired the Commission in 2015, we believe there is even further scope to leverage the inherent flexibility of the Commission to convene regional and country-specific discussions concerning situations beyond the PBC's established agenda.

The annual report on the Peacebuilding Fund reveals another year of innovative action. The Fund has proved to be able to facilitate inter-agency work like few other instruments, to spur action in politically sensitive environments and to take risks. That is why Sweden continues to be a significant supporter of the Fund. I am happy to announce that we will increase our contribution this year from SKr56 to Skr70 million SKr, which is the equivalent of $7.8 million. We remain worried, however, about the lack of funding for the PBF going forward. We look forward to the Secretary-General's reports on sustaining peace, in particular with regard to concrete options for predictable financing for sustaining peace. We encourage him to be as bold as the authors of the original report (see A/69/968) of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture. The forthcoming joint study by the World Bank and the United Nations will present other important recommendations with regard to the cost of prevention and peacebuilding and the role of international development assistance.

Before wrapping up, let me say a word about Liberia. Sweden is happy to continue chairing the PBC country-specific configuration on Liberia and is determined to make sure the PBC accompanies Liberia through a period of multiple transitions in the country's history, including the departure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia and the preparations for the holding of elections in 2018. That will be a moment of truth for peace. The United Nations and the international community must continue to stand by the people of Liberia during this period.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay welcomes the holding of this annual meeting to assess the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund.

First and foremost, we would like to acknowledge, and express our gratitude for, the work of the Permanent Representative of Kenya, Ambassador Kamau, as Chair of the Commission during its tenth session. Although Uruguay did not participate as a member of the Commission last year, it closely monitored its work. This year, Uruguay is participating in and is a member both of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Security Council, and is able to appreciate at first hand the complementary work of both bodies.

The adoption of the two substantially identical resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)) established a "before" and an "after" of the Commission's work. Those documents are a valuable basis not only to establish the way in which the Commission should be run, but they

also offer a new way of viewing sustaining peace at the systemic level. In addition, all the wide-ranging United Nations reviews carried out in 2015 were clear as to the need to prioritize conflict prevention. While much progress has been achieved in developing awareness of the importance of this subject, we think that much remains to be done and that we must be aware of the urgency of taking action now in order to create change.

Uruguay would like once again to underscore its commitment to peacebuilding. As a long-standing troop-contributing country, we are familiar with the challenges that arise on the ground during and after conflicts. In that regard, we agree with the vision expressed in the review of the peacebuilding architecture that peacekeeping tasks are not limited to post-conflict situations, but require continuity that includes the "before", "during" and "after" of conflicts.

We also wish to stress the importance of the Peacebuilding Fund as a flexible and catalytic tool for the distribution of resources for peace-sustaining activities in a number of countries. We welcome the implementation of projects, which has been possible thanks to the Fund's financing and which always seek to provide structural and institutional assistance in the most vulnerable regions. However, we regret that the work of the Peacebuilding Fund continues to depend on voluntary contributions and lacks a predictable budget, which could clearly improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

I would like to conclude my statement by extending my best wishes to the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Cho Tae-yul, in carrying out his work as Chair of the eleventh session of the Peacebuilding Commission. We hope he will continue on the same path to strengthen the achievements made last year and to establish new goals. In that effort, he can count on our support.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): I wish to start by thanking the outgoing Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), His Excellency Mr. Macharia Kamau, for his briefing on the work of the Commission in the year 2016. We are grateful for the stewardship he demonstrated in leading the work of the Commission during its tenth session and congratulate him for his valuable accomplishments. I also congratulate His Excellency Mr. Cho Tae-yul, current Chair of the PBC, who has already made a notable start in his work. We look forward to working with him very closely throughout the year.

The year 2016 was an important one for the work of the PBC, one during which the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted identical resolutions on the review of United Nations peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council 2282 (2016)). We felt then, as we strongly do now, that the PBC has a key role in following up the implementation of the sustaining peace resolutions. While meeting our expectations, during its tenth session, under the able leadership of Ambassador Kamau, the PBC undertook wide-ranging and significant tasks with a view to implementing key recommendations emanating from the resolutions. It is therefore imperative that the Commission keep up the momentum by further strengthening its work for this year by building upon the achievements of the previous session. In that respect, we are pleased to note that the Chair has made financing and partnership his main priorities in 2017.

We are also pleased to note that the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) became the only office within the Secretariat to have exceeded the United Nations-wide commitment to allocating at least 15 per cent of resources to women's empowerment. The launching of the PBF's first-ever Youth Promotion Initiative, which responds to the call made by Security Council resolution (2250) (2015), on youth, peace and security, was also a significant achievement. We believe that these two initiatives on women and youth have a far-reaching positive impact on building inclusive and peaceful societies, and we would like therefore to encourage the PBF to further beef up its activities in these areas.

Nevertheless, as the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture made clear, financing for peacebuilding remains scarce, inconsistent and unpredictable. No doubt the pledging conference organized in September 2016 was a step in a right direction to addressing the funding challenge, in spite of the shortfall. Yet, as the report (A/71/792) of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund states, the demand for PBF assistance has reached historic highs, while the Fund's sustainability still remains in question. Hence, it is important to look for additional and innovative approaches for securing adequate and sustainable financing for peacebuilding activities. In that regard, the contribution of the Peacebuilding Fund as a catalytic, rapid-response and flexible prepositioned

pooled Fund providing financing to activities to sustain peace in conflict-affected countries remains very significant. We expect that the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on sustaining peace will offer us concrete funding options in that respect.

Partnership in peacebuilding is another key element in the work of the PBC. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and with regional organizations such as the African Union remains central in the activities of the Commission. Notwithstanding the PBC's focus on country-specific configurations, promoting a regional approach through engagement with regional and subregional organizations is indeed duly emphasized in the sustaining peace resolutions.

Last year, the PBC visited the headquarters of the African Union, in Addis Ababa, and held consultations with the African Union Peace and Security Council to explore ways to further enhance cooperation in the areas of conflict prevention and sustaining peace across the continent. We feel that such consultations need to be regularized in line with the recommendations suggested by the African Union communiqué issued following the Commission's visit. We also recognize that the PBF provided its first direct funding to the African Union. It is our conviction that the two bodies could further collaborate on their peacebuilding efforts in Africa in line with the implementation of the African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development policy framework, as well as the African Solidarity Initiative.

The need for strengthening the bridging role of the PBC with relevant United Nations principal organs, including the provision of an advisory function for the Commission to the Security Council, has been underlined many times. Of course, that remains one of the areas that need continuous focus and engagement in the work of the Commission.

For our part, as was indicated earlier by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ethiopia, as Chair of the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, together with Senegal, as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will convene a joint meeting on building synergies for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa on 26 April. We believe that the meeting will provide an opportunity to share the Commission's experiences on best practices and lessons learned from its engagements in Africa. We look forward to the Chair's briefing during the joint meeting.

Mr. Kafle (Nepal): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important joint debate. This is a good opportunity for States Members of the United Nations to express their views and reflect on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) following the adoption of identical resolutions last year by the General Assembly and the Security Council on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (respectively, resolution 70/262 and resolution 2282 (2016)).

I take this opportunity to congratulate and express my best wishes to Ambassador Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea, Chair of the PBC, and also to thank Ambassador Macharia Kamau of Kenya and Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota for their important work. My delegation also compliments and encourages Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco in his important work as Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office.

Nepal has been actively supporting the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in different capacities. As one of the top troop-contributing countries, with our own experience of post-conflict management, we have been continuously engaged in the work of the Commission. Nepal has actively served in that body, including as Chair of the Working Group on Lessons Learned.

My delegation welcomes the comprehensive and action-oriented reports of the PBC (A/71/768) and of the Secretary-General (A/71/792). They analyse our challenges, gaps and the way forward in the peacebuilding architecture for the maximum utilization of operational activities — justifying its purpose and usefulness. The reports also clearly demonstrate the importance of partnership in peace processes. My delegation is of the view that partnerships with international financial institutions and other stakeholders, including the private sector, are crucial to garnering their support for effective peacebuilding activities.

Nepal also has a long experience of peacekeeping missions abroad and of its own peacebuilding process at home. That experience has shown that sustaining peace is as important as raising consciousness for peace. The only way to secure peace is to engage all stakeholders — including the most marginalized and vulnerable sections of the community — in a just, equal and fair manner. As the final product of the peace process, the country now has an inclusive and rights-

based Constitution, promulgated by democratically elected representatives of the people, and the first election to local bodies in nearly 20 years will be held on 14 May 2017.

The partnership of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture throughout Nepal's peace process has come a long way. The lessons learned by countries emerging from conflict are important to creating similar success stories in other contexts. Those lessons include the initiatives of creating and sustaining a peaceful focus, developing inclusiveness and promoting local leadership and ownership, and increasing resilience by carrying out regular context-specific assessments. Such initiatives would also harmonize with the Sustainable Development Goals, as inclusive and sustainable development has contributed immensely to preventing conflicts.

In view of achievements, lessons learned and the Secretary-General's concept of a surge in diplomacy for peace, it is essential to recalibrate the PBC's mandate accordingly. There is no doubt that peace and development reinforce each other and there has to be a delicate balance between the two so as to smoothly steer countries in conflict towards the post-conflict phase. In that context, Nepal believes that vulnerable groups, including women, children and the elderly, should be on board and at the core of the peacebuilding process. Nepal has been implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) through tailor-made national action plans for mainstreaming women as integral to the peacebuilding process.

Investing in creating employment, promoting dialogue among communities and enhancing collaborative decisions would increase the opportunity cost of preventing societies from relapsing into conflict. Similarly, coordination, coherence and flexibility are vital to peacebuilding activities.

We stress that the PBC and the PBF must make use of synergies and complementarities for effective and efficient partnerships to have a maximum impact on the ground. The timely allocation of sufficient resources will be decisive to ensuring stability as we use available resources strategically and improving the weak financial health of the PBF. In that regard, Nepal will continue to contribute to United Nations peacebuilding efforts, as always, by constructively engaging with Member States and the United Nations.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want to thank the presidency of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting, which enables us to debate an issue that is critical for our Organization. We are also grateful for the reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (A/71/768) and on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) (A/71/792).

I would like to highlight the exemplary work of Kenyan Ambassador Kamau as 2016 Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). He brought important changes to the Commission's work — which is now progressing along the same lines under the leadership of the current Chair, Korean Ambassador Cho Tae-yul.

Today's meeting is an opportunity to review peacebuilding, considering our trajectory thus far and our path forward. The United Nations participated actively in our peacebuilding process, first advocating a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the 1980s and then playing an important role in the peace negotiations, the signing of agreements and the initial peacebuilding phase.

We would highlight the efforts of the PBC to comply with the relevant recommendations of the resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture (General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016)). The adoption of an advisory gender strategy that underscores the importance of women's leadership and participation in conflict prevention and resolution has been key.

With regard to the Fund, we believe that, despite the lack of financing, it is opening up innovative ways to financially support peace processes. While we certainly believe in the importance of peacebuilding for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is senseless to limit its funding to voluntary contributions. A portion of the regular budget should also be set aside for that purpose.

We would like to share some reflections from our peacebuilding experience and efforts.

First, the root of these types of conflicts lie not only in economic differences, but also in cultural, racial, religious and political differences. In many cases, it is political differences that pervade the discourse and the violence. What that means is that peacebuilding is inextricably linked to building a culture of dialogue

and resolving differences, without which signed peace agreements tend to be short-lived.

Secondly, peacebuilding is not a transitional stage for States, but rather a permanent duty, as it not only implies an end to armed conflict but also the building of public institutions and the development of civic awareness to anchor such efforts.

Thirdly, it is evident that peacebuilding must prioritize putting an end to widespread violence. That is why the first goal is the cessation of violence and a peace agreement among the belligerent parties. But in order to ensure the sustainability of that goal, there must be a reduction in the inequality and exclusivity that caused the conflict, accompanied by the pursuit of a culture of peace that will transform social attitudes. Those are tasks for the entire society. We believe that the PBC should not work almost exclusively on a limited number of cases in a specific subregion, as its vocation is universal and permanent — in line with the relevant resolutions, which call for those very changes.

Fourthly, in contrast with other topics such as sustainable development, human rights and others for which the United Nations has developed the vision and tools to enable it to better carry out its universal tasks, in the case of peace both the vision and tools are still being developed and the practices derived from those weaknesses tend to focus solely on certain aspects of the phenomenon and are no longer comprehensive. On other occasions, there is an attempt to implement solutions that succeeded elsewhere without considering their feasibility or adaptability to the new contexts of peace to which they are being applied.

Fifthly, we therefore believe it is necessary to expand the focus of the Commission in order to give it the ability to broaden its scope, while always prioritizing the most urgent cases. In addition, with appropriate care and with budgetary and political limitations in mind, we must provide the dynamics and tools that will enable it to carry out the new strategy.

Finally, El Salvador calls on all countries that have had success in peacebuilding to share their experiences and good practices with the rest of us. El Salvador has gone through several stages during its process of national reconciliation, but it still faces significant challenges to the creation of a peaceful society with security for its citizens. We are ready to share our experience and to receive the wisdom of other societies, which undoubtedly will be of great help.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): I thank the President
General Assembly for having organized this
debate. I also thank the Chair of the Peacebu
Commission for the report (A/71/768) on the its
session, and the Secretary-General for his
(A/71/792) on the Peacebuilding Fund.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Susta
Development, in 2015, and the twin resol
(General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Se
Council resolution 2282 (2016)) the following
on the United Nations peacebuilding architectu
the stage for addressing the challenges to peac
development through a more coherent, compreh
and coordinated United Nations system. The resol
broadened the scope of peacebuilding so as to enco
the entire peace continuum, with particular inte
preventing conflict and relapse into crisis, an
laid the foundations of a system-wide United N
approach to create synergies and complement
among United Nations organs towards sustaining

Turkey fully agrees with that compreh
approach, which embraces development, peac
security, and human rights as interlinked and mu
reinforcing pillars of the overall United N
activities. The first World Humanitarian Su
held in Istanbul in May 2016, also sought to f
strengthen that framework, with a particular foc
addressing humanitarian crises, in order to p
conflict and sustain peace.

We are pleased to see that our emphas
humanitarian efforts was also echoed by the Secr
General in his inaugural speech (see A/71/P
Turkey also supports his initiative towards a su
diplomacy for peace, as well as his agenda to de
a broader framework for prevention that aims t
momentum to the efforts towards sustaing peace.

It is against that backdrop that Turkey is orga
the fourth Istanbul Conference on Mediation on 3
to explore the untapped potential of mediation in co
prevention and sustainable peace. Firmly convin
the need to address the root causes of crises in
to achieve sustaining peace, Turkey believes th
Conference will also provide an opportunity to e
in a broader spectrum of contemporary ten
including all sorts of discriminatory trends in all
of the world.

The Peacebuilding Commission, with its conv
power, is best placed to provide strategic adv

the relevant United Nations bodies in support of the long-term objective of sustaining peace, as well as country-specific assistance to nations in transition through capacity-building and increasing resilience. The ongoing arrangements to expand the scope of the Peacebuilding Commission through the inclusion of additional countries or regions to its agenda can enhance United Nations efforts of conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

However, that will require more predictable and adequate financial resources, which might be further developed by enlarging the spectrum of stakeholders, including through partnerships with international financial institutions to sustain the Peacebuilding Fund. At the World Humanitarian Summit, we pledged a new multi-year financial package of $1 million to support the Fund.

Turkey also continues to contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development goals at the global level through its development assistance and humanitarian aid programmes. It puts forth a genuine political effort, including through mediation, to support the peaceful settlement of disputes and to prevent and solve conflicts at the regional and international levels. We are working closely with the relevant United Nations and its specialized agencies to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address the security, development and humanitarian challenges in the field. Our financial support to various United Nations agencies, departments, programmes and funds has increased over the years, and Turkey has become an important voluntary contributor to the United Nations, beyond its assessed contributions.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in this joint debate. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 29, 61 and 110.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.